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**TEACHERS' LEARNING IN THE  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF EFL  
LECTURERS IN THAILAND'S  
RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY**

LADDAWAN JAMRERKJANG

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**TEACHERS' LEARNING IN THE PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF  
EFL LECTURERS IN THAILAND'S RAJABHAT  
UNIVERSITY**

**LADDAWAN JAMRERKJANG**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
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Doctor of Philosophy**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis presents an investigation into the professional development processes engaged in by lecturers who have taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand's Rajabhat universities. The aim of the study was to explore the Rajabhat EFL lecturers' learning processes, and examine how they related to their classroom practice. In particular, the study looked at:

1. how these lecturers acquired and developed their professional knowledge during their careers;
2. how they integrated their professional knowledge into classroom practice; and
3. the impact of professional development on their classroom practice.

Historically, the professional development of the Rajabhat EFL lecturers has been predominantly formal, neglecting the informal mode of learning. Furthermore, teachers' professional learning from the classroom has been disregarded. This study attempts to clarify the roles of the two modes of teachers' learning and of classroom practice.

The aim of the study was to explore the Rajabhat EFL lecturers' learning processes, and examine how they related to their classroom practice. The study employed a case study design with a qualitative, ethnographic style approach. Three selected experienced EFL lecturers were the research participants.

Data collection methods consisted of life history interviews, classroom observations, semi-structured and student group interviews. Data analysis was based on the emic approach.

The findings revealed a significant and continual interplay of three elements: the institutional context, the individual teacher, and the teacher's classroom in generating professional development, and thereby, the professional knowledge of the EFL lecturers. Knowledge is acquired and reinforced from both formal and informal professional development but less so from their practice. This was because their meaning perspectives have been focussed less on the students' context, thus addressing insufficiently the impact of their teaching on students' learning.

This study provides a significant contribution to academic development in the area of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the Thai higher education context. Formal and informal learning, the teachers' personal context, and the role of the classroom as a resource for professional learning all contribute to the development of professional knowledge for these lecturers.



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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a comprehensive outline of the study. It provides the information concerning the following aspects:

- an overview of Rajabhat universities
- the culture of practice in teaching English as a foreign language
- the background information of professional development in Rajabhats
- the rationale for the study
- formation of the study
- the distinctiveness of the study
- the context of the study
- explanation of the key terms in the study
- research approach
- the structure of the thesis

Each of these aspects is discussed to provide a general understanding of the context of the study, and of how the study was initiated, developed and carried out. In the section dealing with the structure of the thesis, a synopsis of the main points of each chapter is presented.

### **1.2 An overview of Rajabhat universities**

It is necessary to introduce an overview of Rajabhat universities, thus leading to an understanding of the context of the study. In Thailand, educational

institutions called Rajabhat institutes, located in Bangkok and other regions throughout the country, were formerly teacher's colleges. These institutes currently have been developed as universities to offer wider disciplines than teacher education alone. These new universities are regarded by students as not having the same status as other established universities. Up to the present time, Rajabhats are accelerating to develop the academic staff in order to fulfil the diversified role and gain recognition from society. Therefore, as a topic of professional development, the area of teaching English as a foreign language is particularly crucial in the early development stage of becoming universities.

The overview of Rajabhat universities encompasses the transitional periods from the teacher training schools, to teachers colleges, then Rajabhat institutes and finally Rajabhat universities. It includes these relevant aspects:

- the evolution of Rajabhat universities
- the influence of national contextual factors
- Rajabhat universities in the current state
- the Rajabhat students

### ***1.2.1 The evolution of Rajabhat universities***

The evolution of the Rajabhat universities covers a span of over a century (Promvanit, 2002). The year 1892 marked the starting point when the teacher training school was established to provide pre-service teacher education according to the government policy in delivering teachers to primary schools. In 1954 the Department of Teacher Education was established to supervise teacher education and training services of the teacher training schools school under the Ministry of Education. Within fifteen years (during 1958-1973), due to the demand of teachers, the teachers training schools were promoted to be teachers colleges, and there were thirty-six teachers colleges all over the country. In 1975 the Teachers College Act was implemented, resulting in the new role of the teachers colleges as providing education to the bachelor degree

level for pre-service and in-service teachers, including research on teacher education development.

By 1995 Rajabhats attained the status of being institutes. Later when the Education Act 1999 was implemented, Rajabhat universities became legal entities under the jurisdiction of the Office of Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education in 2004.

The status of Rajabhats seemed to be ever-changing. Contextual factors namely, social, economic, political, technological, cultural, and educational initially impact the institutional factors and consequently demand the roles to be diversified (Promvanit, 2002).

### ***1.2.2 The influence of national contextual factors***

Centralised administration brought about transitions. Hierarchical contextual factors comprise 1) the previous Constitutions of the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Constitution 1997; 2) The National Social and Economic Development Plan 8 (1997-2001); 3) the National Education Act 1999; 4) The Amended National Education Act 2002; 5) The National Social and Economic Development Plan 9 (2002-2006); and 6) the National Education Plan 2002-2016.

The Constitutions establish the main framework for education development. Based on the Constitutions, the National Social and Economic Plans are created, and followed by the National Education Development Plans which then prescribe the policy of the Ministry of Education. These plans and policies have designated the mission and responsibilities of Rajabhats, and other universities as well. These contextual factors exerted multi-levelled control on the 41 Rajabhats into dependent campuses on the central office. The exertion of control, nevertheless, brought about networking among Rajabhats, although it was not continual.



The following part presents the current state of Rajabhat universities. The current state is full of challenges as well as threats. Being autonomous is not the status to be enjoyed only, but this status drives the universities to become proactive, and seek appropriate resolutions to survive and thrive.

### ***1.2.3 Rajabhat universities in the current state***

In order to fulfil the new status, Rajabhat universities have to move forwards by leaps and bounds to be fully autonomous. They must attempt to carry on missions of the higher education institution as well as continue to develop in the competitive global environment. Concurrently, three critical issues are threatening Rajabhats: first, a decline of the student enrolment, second, a shortage of academic staff, and third, the national university financing system.

#### **A decline in the student enrolment**

Before the decline, Rajabhat had these two advantages: 1) Most Rajabhats are located in the provincial areas, and thus are accessible to the local students; and 2) The tuition fees are lower than those charged by other government universities. However, Rajabhats can no longer count on these factors. In 1996, the government launched the state-supported Student Loan Programme to support the needy students on higher education. With the government loan, and the fifteen-year pay-off period, the local students had better choices than Rajabhats. Moreover, if the students fail to enter public universities, they can cope with tuition fees in private universities. This can explain why the situation of student enrolment is threatening.

Moreover, reputable public universities have extended their educational services by setting up campuses in the same locations as Rajabhats. These universities have been able to recruit more students while Rajabhats recruit a diminishing number of students year by year.

### **A shortage of academic staff**

According to the information on the situation of the Rajabhat faculty staff presented by Thamrongthanyawong (2005), half of faculty members were non-permanent part-time lecturers. Eighty percent of these members have less than three-year work experience. This is due to the government measure in downsizing the number of government officials. They offered early retirement packages as incentives, and limited the number of positions in all universities. By this measure, those with high qualifications see no incentives to work as faculty members since they can see less opportunity to progress and almost no security in the teaching career. Furthermore, only 7.01 per cent of current faculty members hold doctorate degrees. Extending the tenure of retired associate professors for another five years has been considered to alleviate the problem, but this cannot solve the problem in the long run (Thamrongthanyawong, 2005:14). Appropriate measure is yet to be implemented for Rajabhats to solve this problem.

### **The national university financing system**

The new Thailand Income Contingent and Allowance Loan (TICAL) Scheme was introduced in 2006 to enable Thai university students to pay for courses in universities according to their preferences. The loans are interest-free. The pay-back starts when the students graduate and earn an income above the threshold level. Every university must demonstrate the unit cost of each course to students for their selection. By doing this, the government has implemented demand-side educational financing, as well as a university grant programme (Krongkaew, 2004). The Scheme may affect those Rajabhats without proactive administration. Although the average unit cost of a course in Rajabhats is lower than those in universities, the students may be willing to pay more in state

universities if they pass the university entrance examination. Those who do not pass can turn to private universities as alternatives.

#### ***1.2.4 The Rajabhat students***

The types of students enrolling in Rajabhats can be categorised as follows: 1) the students who determine to study in reputable programmes in Rajabhats, and who do not deem to study in other universities; 2) the students who select Rajabhats as lower priorities; 3) the students with low motivation, low learning performance, and with weak knowledge background; 4) the privileged students who seek admission via local politicians, or those who patronise the university; 5) the students with mixed abilities; and 6) the students who have been oriented with rote learning, and the spoon-feeding teaching method.

During the last three years, there was a policy from the Ministry of Education to foster Rajabhats to provide an open admission to all high school graduates, since Rajabhats have to maintain the role of being the higher education universities of the communities. The policy affects the quality of teaching and learning. The teachers found that it was discouraging to teach low-motivation students, who see no value of education. It is unlikely that Rajabhats will get outstanding students.

### **1.3 The culture of practice in teaching English as a foreign language**

The culture of EFL teaching covers a wide area of concern, from the national to the Rajabhat contexts. To cover both contexts, the following issues are included.

- The role of English in Thailand
- English education in Thailand
- English language teaching in Rajabhat Universities

### ***1.3.1 The role of English in Thailand***

Thai is the only official language of Thailand. English is the most important foreign language, and the language the most commonly taught in Thai schools and higher education institutions. About 99% of Thai students start their learning in English at the elementary level of education. It is a required subject for the entrance examination to the university, and also a compulsory subject in the curriculum of the tertiary level of education. This is because English is the language for communication and for the new technology (Wongsothorn, et al., 1996; Wiriyachitra, 2004).

In the socio-linguistic context, English is the second mostly used language in the mass media communication in the country. English is significantly used in business transactions in both written and spoken modes, and is the most commonly used in services, especially tourism (Wongsothorn et al., 1996).

### ***1.3.2 English education in Thailand***

Since the implementation of the 1992 Thai National Scheme of Education, English as a foreign language was taught for two years in the primary level and three years in lower secondary level, and three years in upper secondary level. In the Eighth National Education Development Plan: 1997-2001, English was compulsory from year one in the primary level onwards. This acknowledged the significant role of English as an instrument for the students to cope with ‘rapid changes in the world of advanced technologies, especially information technology, and globalisation movements’ (The Eighth National Education Development Plan, 1997-2001: 7). English maintains its significant role when the National Education Plan 2002-2016 emphasises that the Thai people should have equal access to lifelong learning in a knowledge-based society (15). Apart

from having a place in the English curriculum of basic education, English is a compulsory subject comprising twelve credits in the curricula of all academic programmes in the Thai universities.

It is also required that every university student has to pass the National English Proficiency Test before leaving the university (Wiriyachitra, 2004). In universities, students are encouraged more to use the self-access learning and IT centre to promote self-directed learning. This is a scenario of the expectation of positive results deriving from the measures implemented to improve the teaching of English. Meanwhile, an issue of learner-centred approach is widely, and sometimes overly emphasised without realising that it is not the only way of effective learning (Office of Commercial Services, 2002). The teachers should understand that learning is multi-dimensional, and that a range of alternative approaches can be equally effective, if selected appropriately for the contexts of classrooms and learners (Delors, 1996). Most importantly, while it is the duty of the teachers to develop the students' critical thinking skills, and self-evaluation, the teachers should also develop these skills as they teach. A constructive view of teaching English, which involves the teachers in 'making sense of their own classrooms and taking on the role of a reflective practitioner' (Richards, 2002) should be one effective way of improving teaching as well as students' learning.

Alongside the teachers' perceptions that need to be re-examined, the students' perceptions about learning should be re-directed. In the English language learning scenario, the students have been comfortable with the teacher-centred method, meaning that teachers provide accuracy of the language use, and the correct answers. It is difficult to motivate the students to 'wean' from the teacher-directedness.

It can be claimed that Thailand is still far from successful in English language teaching since the Thais do not have an adequate competence in English to successfully communicate in the changing world. This brings about a serious drawback to the development of science and technology, and a lag behind in the

competitive world of business. In education, the language barrier is an important contributing factor to hinder the educators' access to up-to-date views in teaching and learning (Office of Commercial services, 2002). Moreover, a poor command of English renders poor services in tourism, and as a result can affect the tourism industry, which generates the main income of the country (Wiriyachitra, 2004).

### ***1.3.3 Teaching English as a foreign language in Rajabhat universities***

#### **The English curricula 1993 - present**

In the English curricula 1993 compulsory English courses were included as the foundation English subject for students of every discipline. In the English major field for the liberal arts and English education students, courses were divided into three main streams: 1) linguistics and the four skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing; 2) literature; and 3) business English

The present English curricula require the students to take 12 credits of English courses. However, the students with high competence can be exempted from taking the low level course, and can move on to the higher level courses. The English major field curricula are re-categorised into two different areas: liberal arts English programme, and business English programme. A trend of learning in other contexts besides the classroom can be seen. Learning in camps and overseas settings is included as courses. This is an encouragement for students to engage in real interactions with native speakers.

#### **The EFL teachers and their duties**

EFL Rajabhat lecturers are teachers in government higher education institutions as other university lecturers. Like other Rajabhat lecturers, they comply with the required responsibilities, namely 1) providing society with academic and professional education; 2) conducting research; 3) providing academic services

to the community; 4) promoting arts and culture; and 5) training pre-service teachers, and upgrading in-service teachers' qualifications.

An EFL lecturer is required to teach twelve hours per week in the regular daytime programme. Besides, s/he may teach six to twelve hours in the evening, and weekend programmes with extra benefits. S/he is required to conduct research for career advancement, and the development of the community.

Apart from teaching English to students, the EFL lecturers have to be language centre staff. In performing this role, they have to contribute by organising activities such as a self-access unit for the students, English camps, teaching English for the faculty staff members, organising English courses for employees in the companies in the community, and providing training courses for in-service elementary and secondary teachers. Extra duties include management, and cultural affairs.

### **The practice of EFL teaching**

The EFL teachers employ several different ways to motivate the students to learn and understand the lessons. An individual teacher has her/his own preferable teaching styles and methods, which s/he find appropriate to each group of learners. Teaching styles differ from one teacher to another. It is likely that some teachers apply different techniques in different contexts, but others may tend to use the same techniques they feel secure when teaching. In general the shared beliefs, and common practice in teaching English can be observed.

Firstly, when teaching, the teacher considers her/himself as a model of correct English usage and standard pronunciation. Therefore, s/he cannot avoid correcting the learners' mistakes in language use, and pronunciation. S/he applies the audio-lingual method such as having students repeat the model utterances, or dialogues after the teacher.

Secondly, in teaching English for communication, the teacher relies heavily on a commercial course book published in the native-speaking countries. The model language patterns are drilled as a preparation for practice in the forms of role-play, and short oral or written exercise. The main purpose of this type of drill is to get the students to use the language according to its function and in the right situations. The course book is considered 'practical' for teachers who usually have to manage large classes which demand much effort and time. Also, due to the class size, the assessment is preferably in objective type.

Thirdly, it is believed that the students can learn and improve their communicative skills from interactions with native speaker teachers since they are models of authentic English. The belief reflects an influence of the behaviourist view that the more the target language, especially 'authentic' language is exposed to learners, the more potential of competence is developed from that exposure.

Fourthly, teaching as knowledge transmission is still practiced. This is related to the behaviouristic principle, and an attempt to solve the problems of teaching a large class, and of students with mixed levels of skills. It is noted that there is a direct transfer of learning from the receptive skills of listening and reading to the productive skills of speaking and writing. When the learners are exposed to listening and reading texts, it is expected that there will be a potential development of competencies derived from that exposure (Marton, 1988:3).

Finally, the translation method is still used, especially with the evening, and weekend programmes, in which the learners' English language performance is in the elementary level. The translation method can be a combination of explaining the grammatical structure in Thai, and explaining key vocabulary and expressions in Thai. The learners appear extremely passive while the teachers are giving them full explanation in the process of knowledge transmission.



#### **1.4 The background information on professional development in Rajabhat universities**

Before the Education Act of 1999 was implemented, the Supervisory Unit was in charge of the professional development of EFL lecturers, and sought cooperation with international organisations for support in terms of guest speakers and funding for professional development. In-service professional development was held regularly twice or three times per year, and predominantly formal. The main areas of development include English language proficiency, subject knowledge, and the methodology of English language teaching. Typically, the supervisors assessed the lecturers' needs from current situations, such as the modified curriculum, new approaches in teaching certain courses, and the assignment of new duties. The period of training or workshops varied. The topics also varied according to the courses offered in the curriculum, and specialists from overseas. This is a type of professional networking for EFL lecturers, or relatively unstructured collaborative professional development.

EFL Rajabhat teachers were able to develop their professional knowledge from other avenues: the Colombo Plan scholarships for a TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) course in Australia and New Zealand, the British Council subsidies for summer courses in the UK, the United States Information Agent fellowship to a course on American studies in the USA, and fellowships for training courses to the Regional English Language Centre in Singapore.

It can be seen that professional development activities were arranged regularly, and opportunities for EFL lecturers to participate in professional development were plentiful. The EFL participating teachers should benefit considerably from these formal courses. However, it is apparent that the teachers' informal learning and the individual teacher's approaches to her/his learning structured by her/himself have been neglected.

## **1.5 The rationale for the study**

There are three aspects that have generated the initial ideas for the study. First is the problematical phenomenon of English as a Foreign Language professional development in Rajabhats. Second is a personal interest emanating from being an EFL teaching professional, and third is the lack of systematic study on EFL teachers' professional development.

After the abrogation of the Supervisory Unit in 1999, there has been no formal EFL professional development activity arranged among the Rajabhats. Conferences and seminars organised by external professional bodies are not intensive and ongoing. In each Rajabhat, particularly in the department of English, there has been no collaboration among colleagues for professional development. Also, there is a misconception that teachers' learning can only be generated from a formal mode of professional development. Informal learning has not been oriented as a significant mode of learning for the development of professional knowledge.

As an EFL lecturer who has acquired and developed knowledge and skills over time in my long teaching career, I have learned considerably from my experience of teaching. It has been a topic of interest for me to know how the EFL teachers have managed the acquired knowledge, and skills, and then integrated them into the classrooms. It is interesting to explore the processes they utilize within their learning. It has occurred to me at times that my previous professional development experience, both formal and informal, has had a strong impact on my teaching.

I have observed how my colleagues have improved their abilities, and knowledge, to be able to succeed in their classrooms. I was also interested further in the factors that enable some teachers to become experts, and how they maintain their expertise over time. I questioned how the teachers' professional knowledge and skills have been developed and maintained. In my search for literature related to the EFL professional development in the Rajabhat context,

there was a marked lack of relevant literature. Therefore, I intended to conduct a study through a systematic method that can reveal deep and complex areas of the EFL teachers' learning.

## **1.6 Formation of the study**

As previously stated, the problematic phenomenon of EFL teacher development in the Rajabhats, an inadequacy in studies on professional development of EFL teachers in Thailand and my personal interests in teaching professionals have driven me to seek a better understanding of the issues. In order to make the study robust, I considered critical views as the theoretical base to support the study.

### ***1.6.1 Critical views leading to the study***

Critical views leading to the study are of two types: personal views, and perspectives gained from literature. Personal views generate a critical evaluation of the context, and a reflection on prospective problems. Then critical views on current practice in professional development have been sought from the literature.

Since professional development for EFL teachers in Rajabhats was organised in the formal mode, and discontinued due to the abrogation of the Supervisory Unit, the informal mode should be emphasised. However, in the Rajabhat context, the impact of formal professional development is ever present in the teachers' practice. Therefore, any study of the issue of professional development should focus on how teachers have learned, how their knowledge has been formulated, and how professional development has impacted on their classroom practice.

These premises have contributed to the shaping of the study, its objectives and research questions. Fullan (1990) states that professional development for teachers not only covers all activities intended to improve, knowledge, skills,

and performance, but also personal views and thinking about their role as related to the improvement of the work context. Mountford (1987) adds that the teachers' awareness of their practice in their context is neglected. Many views suggested by other scholars include a strong implication that professional development involves multi-factors interacting with each other to become effective. Among those are 'learning professionals' (Eraut, 1994; Schon, 1983, 1987), the practical context as influential in teachers' learning (Apps, 1996; Svinicki, 1990; Cranton and Carusetta, 2002), the 'substantial selves' (Nias, 1989), and teachers' thinking as a cognitive process (Clark and Peterson, 1986).

Moreover, studies on teacher knowledge in the field of EFL show that it is inclusive, embodying all aspects concerning the knowledge used in teaching, personal histories and dispositions, as well as belief systems which contribute to the development of their practice. The classrooms are given an increased role as a vital source of practical knowledge for continuing teacher development (Richards, 1987, 1996; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Freeman and Richards, 1996, Woods, 1991, 1996; Golombek, 1998, and Tsui, 1995, 2003).

### ***1.6.2 Preliminary research questions***

The preliminary research questions reflect the adoption of the paradigms on teachers' learning and the relevant aspects involved, including learning from their classroom practice. The questions included:

1. In what types of activities have the EFL lecturers been engaged to develop their knowledge?
2. How do the experienced lecturers maintain their expert knowledge, and ensure quality teaching?
3. Is there an impact of any professional development on the teachers' practice? How can it be identified?
4. What factors have an influence on the teachers' participation in professional development?

### ***1.6.3 The pilot study and its impact***

The pilot study was conducted to find out the answers to these preliminary research questions. The results revealed three distinctive, interrelated factors which constituted an individual teacher's motivation and decision to participate in continual development: life history aspects, personal characteristics, and professional development as a personal commitment. These emerging issues are vital in shaping the foci of the main study as well as the methodology. The pilot study is discussed in full in Chapter 3.

### ***1.6.4 Research questions***

The pilot study resulted in the modification of the main study, intending to examine systematically the EFL teachers' professional development process through these questions:

1. How do Rajabhat EFL lecturers acquire and develop their knowledge and competence in EFL teaching?
2. How do they integrate this knowledge, competence and experience in their classroom teaching and make it successful?
3. What impact, if any, has been professional development had on their thinking and classroom practice?

### ***1.6.5 The aim of the study***

These questions, therefore, lead to the aim of the study, which is to explore the Rajabhat EFL lecturers' learning processes, and examine how it relates to their classroom practice.

### ***1.6.6 The objectives of the study***

In order to answer the questions, and achieve the aim of the study, the objectives were set up as follows:

1. To conduct an in-depth investigation into the learning processes of the selected participants;
2. To analyse the crucial factors contributing to learning;
3. To critically evaluate the relationship of professional development to classroom practice.

### **1.7 The distinctiveness of the study**

The distinctiveness of the study lies in its original contribution to knowledge concerning the field of EFL teacher professional development, particularly in the Rajabhat context in Thailand. Perspectives on the interdependence for EFL teachers' biographical dimensions, professional development, and classroom practice have never been studied in a Thai higher education setting. The findings gained from this study can provide different and wider perspectives on teacher development, particularly the empowerment of the teachers' role in their learning and development, leading to the improvement of the students' learning, and the development of their institutions. The study was specifically significant in expanding the horizon of teacher development, especially in the Thai context, where formal, structured courses seemed to be widely held as standard practice for teacher development. It is anticipated that this study can generate impact, making those involved in teacher development aware that professional development is a process of learning, one which is multidimensional, and interdependent with teachers, and their classroom context.

## **1.8 The context of the study**

The study is focused on professional development of the Rajabhat university EFL lecturers. In the process of their professional development, their learning as acquisition of knowledge, as well as generation of it from the practical context is of concern. Factors which constitute their professional learning are also covered. The context encompasses the continuing process of learning from the stage of being young learners, along their profession until the present stage where their classroom practice is perceived as a means of learning.

There are several associated terms in the field of teaching English such as EFL, ESL, EAL, and EAP. It is essential to provide definitions of these terms in order to clarify the scope of the study context as follows.

### ***EFL***

EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language. In this definition, English is the language taught in educational institutions, or is used exclusively such as in multi-national offices. English is not used outside these settings. This means that the students scarcely practise English in daily life or regular social settings. Likewise, the teachers do not have opportunities to communicate in English if they do not interact with their expatriate colleagues, or with native speakers in educational or social settings. This implies that in such a context teaching and learning English is mostly confined to the classroom, and if the users do not seek opportunities to practice using it, language growth tends to be slow (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ESL/ESOL/EFL/ELT>).

### ***ESL***

ESL stands for English as a Second Language. The status of English is that of an official language, especially in those countries once colonised by Britain. In this context English is taught in educational institutions. Unlike EFL, the teachers and students in this situation are bilingual, meaning that English is the

language of communication in their daily life. Environments in which the language can be used are plentiful. However, English is also taught to learners as a medium of communication. In some countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, teaching ESL is often sponsored by the government to help newcomers settle into their new country, sometimes as part of an explicit citizenship programme.

### ***ESOL***

ESOL is defined as English for Speakers of Other Languages. It is used interchangeably with EFL. Currently ESL and ESOL are taught in some countries to immigrant learners in their new host country in order to enable them to survive and get on with daily life. Preferably, it is the term used by professional teaching associations since it covers a wider context of teaching and learning than EFL and ESL.

### ***EAL***

EAL refers to English as an Additional Language. It is taught to the pupils who have newly arrived from abroad and come to live permanently in the UK. These pupils know no English or very little English. Teaching EAL is to develop these pupils' English knowledge and competency in order that they can pass the national examination and function well in the UK.

### ***EAP***

EAP refers to English for Academic Purposes. It is taught to students who will enter a university in the UK. The term is also applied to the teaching of English at an academic level to the students in higher education. The text is written in authentic English, and selected from materials of various disciplines.



## **1.9 Explanation of key terms in the study**

This section provides an explanation of the key terms used in the study. The key terms are defined in relevance of the context of the study, which emphasises professional development as a process of learning that occurs in both formal and informal settings. It also includes an explanation of the terms associated with EFL or English as a foreign language.

### ***Professional development***

Staff or academic staff development preferably describes support and provision of programmes to improve the knowledge and teaching performance of the academic staff in higher education institutions (Knight, 1994; Webb, 1996; Griffiths, 1996; Brew, 1995; Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003). The concept of professional development, or staff development encompasses ‘the institutional policies, programmes and procedures which facilitate and support staff so that they may fully serve their own and their institution’s needs.’ (Webb, 1996: 1). Furthermore, it reflects the harmony of the individual academics’ needs and interests, and the requirements of the institution (Warren Piper and Glatter, 1977).

The concept of professional development also points to the issues of educational development and quality of teaching. The two issues are interrelated, and as a consequence bring about the concepts of scholarship of teaching, and learning development of the students. The interconnectedness embodied in professional development is acknowledged by Nicholl (2001) who asserts that professional development connects the individual and the institution in the path of learning which leads to the achievement of student learning.

The issue of scholarship has drawn much attention as a core of professional development of academics in higher education. Scholarship is characterised as ‘public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation and accessible for

exchange and use by other members of one's scholarly community' (Shulman, 1998). The paradigm of scholarship in higher education has been introduced by Boyer (1990) to designate a role of the academic, including 'discovery', 'integration', 'application' and 'teaching'. In this paradigm research and teaching are the core elements. Scholarship can be described as 1) on-going learning about teaching (Kreber and Cranton, 2000) through 'engagement with the scholarly contributions of others on teaching and learning' (Martin et al., 1998); 2) reflection on one's own practice in relation to student learning within the context of a particular discipline; and 3) communication and dissemination of the knowledge as a result of the evaluation of one's teaching practice.

Professional development for academic staff links research and teaching. Reflective practice in a research process requires teachers to inquire into one's teaching, and draw upon insights that address the students' perceptions and learning. Professional development is a process of learning through teaching which is 'research-led and student-centred'. Learning is also a process whereby the teachers 'develop a critical approach' to cope 'uncertainties with clarity,' thereby opening a door for real and lasting change (Rowland, 2000:124).

### ***Teacher learning***

The goal of learning is a change of behaviour. In learning, the teachers are involved in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. Learning can be learned from their experience, and particularly through their own teaching. In this process, the teachers are able to 'formulate a new mental construct or revise a prior mental construct (conceptual knowledge such as attitudes or values). This leads to a change in the teachers' attitudes, values, beliefs in their practice (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning>).

The learning process is continual. It occurs in any mode, not restricted to the formal one. Brew (1995) notes that learning is not confined to an acquisition of knowledge, but should be context-bound, problem-oriented, and directed in line with student learning. Teacher learning should be derived from an

understanding of how students learn, and how to enhance the student learning (Knight, 2000; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). To achieve the goal of transforming the student learning, teachers should take on the role of learner, not only to acquire the new knowledge, but also, and most importantly, to learn about their own practice in order to improve it, and thereby improve the student learning. Teachers' self-awareness for their own practical theories can be raised in several processes of learning such as experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), constructivism (Piaget, 1966; Richardson, 1997), and social learning theories (Putnam and Borko, 2000; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1998). These learning theories are described as underlying theoretical bases of teacher learning.

Community of practice, or the 'talking with colleagues' is recognised as a means of communication for teachers to construct as well as acquire knowledge of teaching. In a 'non-threatening, and non-judgemental' environment, dialogue becomes an established communicative language to probe their practice assumptions (Qualter, 2000) as well as construct 'ways of thinking about teaching within the context of their institution and culture' (Cranton and Carusetta, 2002).

In summary, teacher learning is context-based and inseparable from the task of transforming the student learning. Teacher learning is less a matter of individualistic process, but is socially and collaboratively constructed.

### ***Teachers' beliefs***

Teachers' beliefs are indicators of decisions, and intentions in teaching. They impact on their teaching. Beliefs have 'a relatively strong cognitive component' (van den Berg, 2002), and 'typically reflect the teachers' opinions regarding the processes of teaching and learning' (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 63). They are formed early, and into clusters throughout time, experience, reason and education, and difficult to be changed (Pajares, 1992). Researchers on teacher meaning construction, such as Poole (1996), Azjen (1991), Goleman (1996), Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) and Pajares (1992) assert that teachers' beliefs,

combined with attitudes and emotions influence their meaning perspectives which are highly personal, and resistant to change.

The characteristics of being cognitive, deep-rooted in the personal identity, and resistant to change are pertinent to teacher learning in terms of professional development. Pierce (1877) postulated that a scientific inquiry can generate change in fixating beliefs since the investigation process enables these beliefs to be tested, and as a result, the teachers' beliefs are transformed. In the inquiry process teachers learn when they have an opportunity to 1) juxtapose their current beliefs and practices with other scholarly ideas and contribution; and 2) question the held beliefs, critique them, attempt to cope with the tensions arising in this process, and explore what the answers should be (Stephens et al., 2000).

Teacher beliefs also play an important role in perceptions of career growth, which affect the intention to develop the teaching that generates student achievement. According to Sawyer (2001), the beliefs held by the teachers who intend to change their teaching practice clearly reflect their concerns with student learning. More importantly, the beliefs correspond closely with their established perceptions which focus on themselves and students in collaborative contexts. It can be concluded that teachers' beliefs are grounded in personal/professional meanings of teaching. They are influenced by the teachers' knowledge, personal experience, and emotional feelings; and they constitute their motivation to learn from their practice.

### ***Professional knowledge for teaching***

Professional knowledge embodies a process of learning, constructing and utilising knowledge in the work context. Knowledge for teaching includes 1) discipline-based subject knowledge; 2) 'practical wisdom' (Eraut, 1994) based on the interpretation of previous knowledge and experience in association with the judgement of the current context; and 3) self-knowledge of performance to make 'theories in use' (Argyris and Schon, 1974) explicit and

‘open to criticism as the key to professional learning’ (Eraut, 1994: 66); and 4) personal perspectives, backgrounds, histories, and teaching styles (Raymond, Butt and Townsend, 1992).

Teachers’ professional knowledge is practical knowledge, or teaching knowledge. It comprises ‘a complex set of understandings held by individual teacher . . . derived from unique ways of thinking and appears to be influenced largely by personal experience’ (Bradshaw, 1991). Its theoretical structure comprises thinking, synthesis, and activation, referring to what the teachers think, what they do, and how they teach. The growth of practical knowledge is heavily influenced by the teachers’ experience and role awareness (Ibid). The issue of teachers’ personal dimensions is emphasised as being powerful in the domain of teachers’ practical knowledge, which is alternatively designated as ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1986). The term reflects a conceptualisation of teachers’ practice encompassing their intellectual aspects, emotions, values, beliefs, and interactions with professional contexts (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995; Butt et al., 1992). Therefore, when the teachers are encouraged to engage in self-reflection, they are able to analyse and recognise these various aspects of their practical knowledge. They, then, evaluate and revise their teaching.

Investigation into the teachers’ own practice is recommended as an effective means of developing their professional knowledge. This enables the teachers to appreciate the worth of their intuitive thinking, and valuable experience, as well as critique their intuitive knowledge, and taken-for-granted assumptions that affect their practice, or hinder their perspectives of student achievement. In this way, practical knowledge evolves in the process of interpretation, and appropriate integration into the practical context.

### *Classroom practice*

The classroom is a setting where teachers interact with their students. In the process of interaction teachers teach and, in the meantime, learn to teach. Therefore, from the classroom practice, teachers can generate their knowledge for teaching and develop a deeper understanding of it through the management of learning in the classroom.

Classroom practice is a means as well as a process by which teacher knowledge is 'jointly constructed' by the teachers' specific context of work and their interaction with the context. The teachers appropriate their ideas, theories, concepts and experiences, and put them to work for their students.

Furthermore, when the teachers put their efforts into examining problematic teaching situations and deliberately reflecting on them to find practical solutions, they are involved in the process of learning from the classroom context, and from their practice. In this way, the classroom enables the teachers to 'theorise their practical knowledge' through reflection and conscious deliberation and transform the 'formal knowledge' into practical knowledge (Tsui, 2003).

Classroom-based professional development has been proposed to empower teachers as academics who are able to investigate their own teaching theories. The activities recommended are namely, 1) teaching journals for recording teaching experience; 2) lesson reports including the main features of the lessons; 3) surveys and questionnaires for gathering particular aspects of teaching and learning; 4) audio and video recordings; 5) peer observation; and 6) action research designed to bring about change in some aspects of teaching (Richard and Lockhart, 1994).

Moreover, there has been a tendency for teachers to reconsider their classroom practice, to set long-term goals in teaching, to take the students seriously, to 'strive constantly' to get closer to the students' points of view, and to create a

sense of community where learners and teachers engage in reflection, problem-solving and discovery. Meanwhile teachers are encouraged to get together and engage in a discourse that welcomes both fallibility and possibilities of their practice. This is a culture where academics talk and learn about their craft; a desirable culture of professional development that can develop meaningful teaching and learning (Kohn, 2000).

## **1. 10 Research approach**

My role as a committee member of the university cultural centre in the past has provided me, to some extent, with background experience in gaining information from people within their life and work contexts, in collecting evidence, and in observing people's behaviour in an ethnographic way. However, this experience may be perceived to be modest. Therefore, I developed knowledge and experience of conducting research from reading research theories, and through attendance of workshops.

The nature of my study clearly suggests an approach that needs prolonged involvement in the study site. Data on teachers' learning should be in-depth and multi-dimensional. I decided to employ case study methodology with a qualitative approach and multiple methods to gain information from the three cases of experienced lecturers of EFL in different Rajabhat institutes. My intention was to obtain research data from multi-site participants who will reflect and demonstrate different characteristics, cultures, and experiences from different contexts. Data has been gathered via multi-methods, consisting of life history interviews, semi-structured interviews, non-participant class observations, and group discussions with the students. Data collection covered a period of 18 months.

Analysis of the data took place during the fieldwork. Emergent themes were presented in matrix displays, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Then, the method of cross-case analysis has been used in order to distinguish each case. Finally the three cases are individually presented in the findings.

## **1. 11 The structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of Rajabhat universities, the culture of practice in teaching English as a foreign language, the rationale of the study, what problem was addressed, what critical views were taken as a basis of the study, how the study was planned, and what approach was most appropriate to gain knowledge in order to investigate the research questions. The chapter also describes the original contribution of this study to the field of EFL teacher development in Rajabhat universities in Thailand.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review focusing on these aspects: 1) trends in professional, influential factors impelling professional development; 2) the acquisition and development of knowledge and competence in EFL teachers, 3) the impact of professional development on the thinking and classroom practice of EFL teachers; and 4) the role of the classroom in developing teacher knowledge.

Chapter 3 describes the pilot study, comprising background, definition of key concepts, objectives, methodology, findings, and finally an evaluation of the pilot study. The final part explains important emergent themes that have impacted on the design of the main study.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology used. The description includes how the research questions evolved, why an ethnographic style approach to the study has been adopted, why a case study approach was chosen, why a qualitative approach is appropriate for data collection, what methods have been used in data analysis, and why they are appropriate. The justification of the methodology employed is presented in detail. Also, the fieldwork process is presented, followed by the data analysis process, trustworthiness, and reflexivity.



Chapter 5 reports the key themes emerging from the data analysis. The themes are in the scope of the research questions. Additional themes which emerged from the interviews with the students are also presented in relation to the classroom practice of each participating teacher. The key themes are concerned with the teachers' personal histories, their professional development, their integration of professional knowledge for classroom use, and the impact of professional development on their practice. The emergent themes from the students relate to their perspectives of the teachers' classroom practice, their expectations of the teachers, and their learning styles

Chapter 6 presents a critical discussion of the findings, in which the individual teacher's account is examined in relation to relevant issues in the literature review, and the EFL teaching context in Rajabhat universities. The discussion depicts the interplay of the three essential elements in professional development, the impact of professional development on the teachers' thinking and practice in the classroom. The extent of the impact depends considerably on the teachers' perceptions of the classroom in relation to their practical knowledge, the students, and their practice.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion of the study, and the recommendations based on it. It sums up the major issues disclosed in the study, and how these issues reiterate, or disagree with, the conventional views of teacher development, especially in EFL teaching. Finally, recommendations are proposed with regard to the Rajabhat university context for the purpose of improving EFL teacher development.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

The overview offers two implications: firstly an important role of English in developing education and economy of the country, and secondly, as a result, better perspectives and approaches to teaching English should be sought. More importantly, effective professional development of EFL teachers should be identified. The implications have indicated that the contribution of my study

can be an impetus for those involved in EFL teacher development, both at the levels of policy and practice to recognise that well-engaged academic staff development can generate the improvement of teaching EFL in Rajabhat and in a wider context in Thailand.

This chapter captures the essential features of the study: the rationale indicating the issues concerning EFL teachers' professional development which need to be addressed, how the issues were conceptualised in relation to the current paradigms on teachers' learning, how the study was formed, and how significant the study is in terms of its contribution to knowledge in the area of EFL teachers' professional development. Additionally, the research approach is described briefly to introduce the underlying reasons for selecting a qualitative approach for the study. Finally, the structure of the entire thesis, including each chapter and its area of concern, is presented.

The next chapter is concerned with a review of literature relevant to the study. The review presents studies and perspectives that provide theoretical and methodological concepts for the study, concerning how teachers have learned to enhance their professional knowledge, how they have formulated that knowledge and put it into classroom practice, how their practice has been impacted by professional development, and what factors contribute to the teachers' learning from the classroom.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of literature dealing with teachers' professional development, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language. The selected literature provides significant implications for the study concerning these key issues:

1. how the EFL teachers acquire professional knowledge and competence for their teaching;
2. how they integrate this knowledge, competence and experience into their classroom teaching and make it successful;
3. what the impact of professional development has been on the thinking and classroom practice of EFL teachers.

Following these key issues, the review consists of five major sections, namely:

- trends in professional development, influential factors impelling professional development,
- the acquisition and development of knowledge and competence of EFL lecturers,
- the impact of professional development on the thinking and classroom practice of EFL teachers,
- the role of the classroom in developing teacher knowledge.

In Section 2.2 major trends in professional development are discussed as a background information prior to learning of teachers. Section 2.3 outlines influential factors and motivations in professional development of teachers. Societal and global influences, including institutional influences contribute to

the necessity of professional development. At the individual level, intrinsic motivations, opportunities in the institutions, and the teachers' use of their context to contribute to their learning. Section 2.4 presents the acquisition and development of knowledge and competence of EFL teachers. This section includes how teachers generate their practical knowledge and integrate it into the classroom. In order to understand the knowledge generation and application as a learning process, two sub-sections on effectiveness of biographical research in revealing teachers' personal aspects influencing their learning, and methods promoting awareness of teachers in their learning are included.

Section 2.5 discusses the impact of professional development on the thinking and classroom practice of EFL teachers. Teacher knowledge is defined and the applicability of the knowledge to the classroom is discussed.

Section 2.6 shows the significant role of the classroom as a source of teachers' learning. This depends considerably on the teachers' meaning perspectives on their own practice in relation to the students' learning. Also meaning perspectives of teachers can be transformed when collaborative learning among teachers is systematically formed.

The last two sections deal with limitations of the existing research in this field (2.7), and the conclusion (2.8).

## **2.2 Trends in professional development**

Literature in academic staff development in higher education identifies trends of practice in developing the academics' professional knowledge and teaching performance in three main categories: provision of formal courses, work-based professional development, and informal learning. The trends reflect an emphasis on the paradigm of continuing professional development for teaching and learning, and lifelong learning. The three categories are overlapping since learning is not restricted to only one mode.

### ***2.2.1 Provision of formal courses***

A formal mode of learning is provided in the form of award-bearing courses with qualifications, and non-award bearing courses. The aim of the award-bearing course is to improve the practitioners' performance through the achievement of a specialist qualification or an academic award (Eraut, 1994). They comprises theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning, with the 'reflective practitioner' as the leading paradigm. In the course, assignments are relatively work-based. The self and peer assessment, and teaching portfolios are applied (Griffiths, 1996). Peer observation, mentoring, and team teaching are included activities. In Thailand, a trend of classroom-based research has recently appeared as a requirement in graduate award-bearing courses. The use of self-investigation through methods such as diaries, teaching portfolios, teaching journals is employed to raise teachers' awareness as part of learning, to investigate how they interpret their teaching styles, as well as explore the issues related to teaching beliefs and behaviours which derive from and contribute to particular teaching styles (Martliam, 1998; Khajornchaikul, 1992).

Non-award bearing courses are workshops, conferences, seminars, commonly held in a short period of time. Issues covered in these activities are research, management development, curriculum change, and skills enhancement. Effectiveness of these activities lies in relevance to a particular change, and in a rapid response to innovation (Griffiths, 1996). In the case of Thailand, the high relevance of these non-award bearing activities is manifest in the useful content for academics, such as teaching techniques, computer skills, writing for publication, and research techniques (Sinlarat, 2003).

### ***2.2.2 Influential paradigms in the provision of professional knowledge***

There are three prevalent paradigms that influence the practice of teacher development. First, it is the conception of teaching as craft or labour. This, according to Hoban (2002:11), leads to an assumption that teacher learning solely relies on workshop attendance as a means to gain additional knowledge

and skills to increase teaching mastery. This also leads to a conception that knowledge and ideas presented in workshops are transferable, and formal knowledge gained from one context has been learned and will work well in another.

Second, the concept of changes in teachers' behaviour is a main concern. The conventional provision of professional development is influenced by behaviourism. Behaviourist psychology puts an emphasis on observable behaviour, which depends on external stimuli. Learning occurs when external stimuli benefit and reinforce the person's behaviour. Operant conditioning, referring to positive and negative stimuli as reinforcements, causes desirable changes in behaviour. From this perspective, all social behaviour is seen as externally 'shaped and maintained by its consequences' (Roth, 1990: 272). Skinner (1971) urged that operant conditioning could fix socially unacceptable behaviour by shaping desirable behaviour. This concept is prevalent in the Joyce and Showers' (1988) model of training.

Third is the conception of teachers being the target of development in the quality of education. Therefore, activities to develop them are thought to be provided with the principal aims of being geared towards the improvement of competency in the teachers, their understandings of the national curriculum and of government educational policies. Aspects of teachers' performance assessment, as well as the dominance of institutions, are also greatly involved in these goals (Craft, 2000).

Agreeing with the three influential conceptions of formal professional development, Marshall (1998: 6) points out that formal professional development is predominantly based on the training paradigm, constituting the following concepts:

- Transmission of knowledge is a means of improving the teachers' knowledge and skills.

- Knowledge transmitted in one context is ‘meaningful and readily transferred’ to another.
- The planning and implementation of the development is the responsibility of the experts or developers.

A prevalent activity reflecting the training paradigm is the INSET course, a short programme for in-service teachers (Craft, 2000). Teachers attend the course away from their teaching environment, and upon their return to their institutions, they are expected to display more knowledge and teach more effectively. The notion of an INSET course capable of transforming the teachers’ knowledge and practice in a short period of time is commonly found. Also, the notion of experts providing the ‘firm knowledge’ to trainees has become an accepted standard. The typical training process is divided into two phases: the ‘why’ phase when a rationale for ‘new’ theories is presented, and the ‘how’ phase when there are demonstrations of ways to apply the theories into practice (Wolter, 2000). However, the training process can be extended into a model inclusive of sequential steps from theory presentation to practice in simulated situations, as seen in the Joyce and Showers model (1988).

Joyce and Showers (1988) believe that if the professional development of teachers is to be linked with students’ learning outcomes and school development, teachers need to be intensively trained. Effective training should consist of these aspects: training content, types of outcomes, and training components. The training content should be designed according to these main objectives: ‘a refining of knowledge, or an addition to repertoire’ (67). The outcomes expected are those relating to awareness of practices, changes in attitudes, skills development, and application. Training components consist of the study of theories and principles, demonstration, practice, feedback and coaching.

The model proposed shows a close link between training components and outcomes. Each component also constitutes a stage of training. In the first component the theories are presented in order to raise an awareness of the

underlying principles of intended practice. The demonstration component is utilised to place impact on the awareness, and reinforce the theories previously presented. Practice has to be conducted in simulated settings again to reinforce the knowledge and modelled skills. Feedback is used to generate impact on awareness, knowledge, skills and application. Finally, coaching is meant to impact on the previous outcomes. The focus of the Joyce and Showers model is on the intended change in teachers' behaviour. When teachers are trained in simulated settings and coached in real situations, their teaching competence can be improved and, consequently, the students' learning can be improved.

The Joyce and Showers' model provides a thorough process of training. Although it suggests a deliberate means to the achievement of students' learning, it seems to overly emphasise the significance of the input and expected outcome. Although the process is intensive and deliberate, the long-term effectiveness of the training can be dubious. Practice in simulated settings cannot assure the applicability of received knowledge and skills in the actual practical contexts. Likewise, effectiveness in students' learning cannot be certain since the nature of the students varies. Aside from this, the model neglects to reflect on the significance of the teachers' ability to develop their knowledge as well as their complex personal perspectives, such as their emotions, beliefs, and experiences, which play a vital role in cultivating their practical knowledge.

### ***2.2.3 Criticism on the formal professional development courses***

Striking weaknesses of the non-award bearing activities are 'a lack of continuity and the lack of opportunity to explore a topic in depth'. (Griffiths, 1996: 38). In the Thai context, apart from the lack of continuity, the issues of irrelevance and impracticality are clearly shown. Also, teaching improvement is not adequately addressed by the staff developers, and the academics themselves. Furthermore, research-informed teaching should be recognised, and prioritized in the policy level (Sinlarat, 2003).



The matter of time constraints is also an important limitation of formal professional development, and related to the transferability of the knowledge from training. In the practical context time for reflection may not be available for the teachers. The trained knowledge and skills may not be continuously put to use in practical contexts. As a result, relevance and sustainability of the acquired knowledge and skills may be missing. Formal development should not be the only mode that provides learning for the teachers.

Uncertainty of the impact of the behaviourist model of training, such as the Joyce and Showers model is expressed by several critics. For example, Lortie (1975) questions whether it has a direct impact on teachers. Kwo (1994) points out that the widely accepted models of teacher development, emphasising modelling, reinforcements, and coaching, neglect the possibility of teachers' resistance. Flaws can be found in these areas: irrelevance in the content and the teachers' practice, and resistance of teachers to this type of development. Moreover, the intensive training may not modify teachers' behaviours. Therefore, change cannot be expected to occur in the teachers' practice. Adding to what Kwo has indicated, Roberts (1998: 14) argues that the intention to change the teachers' behaviour is 'a denial of individual rights and a gross oversimplification of change in personal behaviour'.

#### ***2.2.4 Work-based professional development***

The context of higher education and its implications for the staff roles cannot rely only on the formal mode of professional development. A holistic approach to the development has been proposed as a forefront of staff development. The approach integrates learning and work, addresses the needs of the individual academics, acknowledges the relevance of professional knowledge to the work context, and 'the power of professional ethos and academic values' (Brew and Boud, 1996: 17). Anderson, Boud and Sampson (1996), and Brew and Boud (1996) recommend a scheme called 'the learning contract' which is 'a three-way agreement involving the person undertaking the learning, an academic adviser and a workplace supervisor' (22). The learning contract can legitimise

‘the development which the individual wishes to undertake while at the same time addressing the needs of the department for specific skills’ (Brew and Boud, 1996). Although a claim has been made that work-based learning can generate a link between the academic’s multiple roles and the requirements of the department and institution, there are no clearly developed criteria for assessing effectiveness of the learning contract.

Work-based professional learning can be developed from classroom-based research or practitioner research which is claimed as ‘fundamental to developing a greater understanding of the work of teachers and what happens in the classroom’ (Burton, 2004). In practitioner research, teachers systematically conduct inquiry about their work and their students’ learning, reflect on their findings, and make informed decisions about implementing changes in their practice

Conventional practice of professional development, namely mentoring, and teaching observation are often included in formal professional development courses, they can be appropriately arranged as work-based learning activities when mentors are trained for mentoring, and when teaching observation is not conducted for the purpose of appraisal only (Griffiths, 1996). Other activities such as work-shadowing, exchange in research and teaching with partner universities overseas, promotion of translating, or publishing academic journals are included as work-based learning (Khamtrong, 2002).

### ***2.2.5 Informal professional learning***

Professional learning occurs from regular practice, and more often, non-formally (Eraut, 1994; Knight, 2006). Studies have shown that informal professional learning is more prevalent across professions (Mintzberg, 2004; Becher, 1999). In higher education a paradigm of ‘learning from learning’ is acknowledged from the view that academics are involved in both personal and professional learning from their day-to-day work which is concerned a great deal with student learning (Nicholls, 2001). Informal learning is ‘situated’,

being in part a product of activity, context, and culture that is developed and used (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989). It occurs when the professional is aware of values as well as challenges in their work. Moreover, feedback from students, support from colleagues and the nature of contextual factors play a very important role in stimulating informal learning (Eraut et al., 2004).

Informal learning methods include conversations with colleagues and reading (Ming, 1999), receiving informal feedback from colleagues and students, being mentored, joint activities such as co-writing courses, networking, and private reflection (Ferman, 2002). However, learning is most effective when the teachers engage in a personal exploration, and learning in the work setting (Rowland, 2000). This concept leads to the trends of reflective practice and action research. These two become organic constituents in teachers' learning processes whereby the teachers examine their own teaching practice and their students' learning 'for the purpose of improving their practice or changing their social environment' (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992: 88). It has been asserted that in the action research process, teachers' perspectives and practices are transformed from 'teacher-centred to a learning-centred dialogic approach' (Gravett, 2004).

## **2.3 Influential factors impelling professional development**

### ***2.3.1 Societal and global influences***

Global and social phenomena have exerted imperatives on higher education institutions. Firstly, this is the age of 'knowledge explosion'. Knowledge and information are growing enormously, and this impacts on learning in higher education (Howell, Williams and Lindsay, 2003). Secondly, there have been an increased number and diversity of students (Knight, 1993). Learners are from different ethnic and age groups. They demand courses that suit their needs and circumstances (Howell, Williams and Lindsay, 2003). Thirdly, demands from industry for graduates who are 'flexible and adaptable', and more importantly, willing to be life-long learners (Brew, 1995). Fourthly, a global trend concerning higher education relevance in the twentieth century has encouraged

universities to develop links with surrounding societies, not in national, but regional development, in a re-directed mission of 'the delivery of life-long learning, and in the development of civic culture' (Gibbons, 1998). Finally, the impact of quality assessment requires the universities to carry out schemes for educational development to reach that quality. These major influences demand higher education institutions to aim for change, an 'organisational change which is management-and policy-oriented, and which really addresses the academic staff' (Webb, 1996: 2).

### ***2.3.2 Institutional influences***

Global and societal trends are external influences that require institutions to set clear educational goals, change their management and policy, and in turn develop a culture that activates academic staff to commit to improvement of teaching and learning. The culture can be seen in these activities: 1) the support of senior management and course leaders, which is vital in providing an impetus for innovations in teaching and learning; 2) resource investment in teaching for individuals and institutions; and 3) prioritising teaching as 'a key academic pursuit' by continuing the development of teaching and learning as a mainstream activity of the institution (Griffiths, 1996; Barlow, 1995).

### ***2.3.3 Motivations and contributing factors in professional development***

Studies on teachers' motivation reveal that teachers' engagement in professional development is voluntary (Griffiths, 1996; Sinlarat, 2003). Intrinsic motivation is an important factor. Motivation for professional learning is 'deeply related to workplace environments.' (Knight, 2006). The teachers who continually participate in development are those who take opportunities available to them to get 'satisfaction and self-actualisation through their work' Therefore, when teachers are enthusiastic about learning to improve their teaching, there should be 'opportunities and affordances for self-actualisation' in a systematic way (Knight, 2006: 8).

Motivations and contributing factors are discussed in association with a concept of teachers as learners and relevant learning theories to clarify the nature of teachers' learning.

### **Teachers as learners**

The concept that teachers are capable of constructing their knowledge, which possesses epistemological value, has placed a focus on the teachers' themselves and their personal lives. Taking on the role of learners, teachers both engage in learning and understand learning. First of all, they feel the need to learn and they aim at attaining valuable experience in learning (Knowles, 1990). They are 'reflective professionals' (Clark, 1992) who have a 'propensity for personal and self-directed growth and development' (Webb, 1996). Therefore, they can design, continue to revise, redesign and learn from experiences. They are capable of learning through 'self-knowledge and self-understanding' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992), as well as formulating their 'personal practical knowledge' which embodies their experiences (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985); their personal backgrounds, histories, and teaching styles (Raymond, Butt and Townsend, 1992)

### **The nature of teacher learning processes**

There are three contributing factors in teachers' learning: the teachers, the context, and the mechanism employed in the process of learning. Considering the first factor, scholars have discussed the concept of the teachers' selves to suggest that the selves are powerful in their decisions on their role as teachers and, consequently, their attitudes and beliefs concerning most aspects of teaching. The issue of the substantial self is strongly emphasized. Nias (1989) in her detailed study of the personal and professional experience of primary teachers has made an interesting point that

the substantial self is the core of both person and teacher. In other words, although teachers can and do develop, they will not change professionally unless they also change as people. It is, inexorably, the person who takes up and carries out the job and people, ... are

characterized by a stable sense of self, imbued with values, and beliefs which are powerfully self-defining. (79)

From Nias' work, it is evident that the personal lives of teachers are tied closely with their professional lives. Attitudes, beliefs, and emotions are embedded in the substantial selves of the teachers, and they play a strong role in the teachers' commitment to teaching and their development.

The context that contributes to learning are the institution, the department, and the classroom. The teachers' decisions, made consciously and non-consciously, about teaching are influenced by the context (Cranton, 1998). Their teaching philosophy and styles are developed within the context (Heimlich and Norland, 1994). Apps (1994: 174) states that 'teachers increasingly become students of the context, for all learning occurs in an often complicated ambiguous context.'

As learners of the context, the teachers are active and powerful in their practice and development. They possess the 'substantial selves' consisting of 'a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes', which are developed over time, and are 'highly resistant to change' ( Nias, 1989: 203). The task of teaching is invested by the teachers' selves, and is concerned with cognitive and affective aspects. Therefore, the substantial selves with a set of values can determine a choice of learning. Concurrently, physical, cultural, and human factors in the context contribute to affirm the teachers' substantial selves.

The significant context for the informal learning of teachers can be reference groups inside and outside schools, which are very important to the teachers' professional practice as, through these, they find confirmation of their self-conceptions and self-images. Nias (1989) considers that communication among teachers and reference groups is essential. It establishes a 'shared language by which to attach meanings to their common experience' (59). In summary, Nias's view can be applied to teachers' learning in that teachers' selves and their strong personal perspectives are powerful in their learning. Meanwhile, they still need support for their practice, learning and development from the reference groups which are part of the contextual factors.

In informal learning, the teachers and the context are inseparable factors. To explain how teachers learn, perspectives of learning which emphasize the learning process as an interactive process between the teachers and the context are presented in order to seek appropriate explanations of the teachers' learning process. Relevant learning theories are symbolic interactionism, experiential learning, social learning theory, and constructivism which will sequentially be discussed to facilitate an understanding of the central concepts of each theory and its limitations.

### **Symbolic interactionism**

In the symbolic interactionistic view, the process of learning is considered as a social interaction in which the self is very active. According to Mead (1934), the self is 'a process', enabling one to observe, respond to, and direct one's own behaviour. Lauer and Handel (1977:67-69) add that, firstly, the self is an ongoing dialectic process between the two phases, the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'unpredictable, the novel, and the driving impulses' exist in the 'I', whereas 'the organised community', and the 'generalised expectations of the social environment exist in the 'me'. Second, the self is reflexive, aware of capabilities to act and guide and evaluate one's behaviour. Third, the self is 'an organization of shared attitudes', and the self 'involves a set of attitudes which are aroused in both the individual and in other who compose the social milieu'. The self enables the individual to live and function in the social environment through shared meanings. Fourth, the self is a means for the individual to conform to community expectations. This does not mean that the individual is controlled by the community, but the individual and the context are engaged in an ongoing process of reciprocal influence.

A teacher, according to the social interactionistic view, is an actor, with effective mechanisms in learning, such as motivation, an ability to observe, a daring sense to challenge the unknown, and reflexivity generating awareness. All mechanisms support the teacher to investigate, interact and evaluate their

perception as well as their existing structured social context. It can be seen that the self renders the teacher as being social, and inseparable from relationships with other individuals (Hewitt, 1994). Teachers as individuals interpret their experience with others (Mead, 1934). They make meaning of the situations, or the world, and in the meantime, their meanings are also appraised by others in the world. Therefore, the process of learning is a shared meaning making process between the teachers and the social context.

The social interactionistic view of learning is applicable to explain the informal learning of the teachers who, firstly, are stimulated by held professional values within their conscience, such as the sense of legitimacy in being effective teachers (Moran, 1996). These teachers feel the need of learning to develop their professional practice out of their selves. Secondly, the teachers realise that they are capable of learning when they want to seek new ways to improve classroom practices, take on challenges, explore and experiment concerning teaching. However, possessing the mechanism is a different matter from feeling the need for learning. When the teachers see novel situations, or problems in their context, they may not see the need to learn to counter them. Therefore, some aspects of context should contribute to stimulating the teachers to feel the need to learn.

### **Experiential learning**

Theories of experiential learning are appropriate in explaining the teachers' learning process as teachers learn from their practice and, more importantly, their teaching experiences are a very important source of their knowledge, as well as the process of their learning.

A pioneering contribution to experiential learning is from Dewey (1938), who explains that learning is the consequence of the transformation of the 'impulses, feelings, and desires of concrete experience into higher-order purposeful action' (69). It is this purposeful action that drives the learning process, and learning



occurs through the individual's reflection, and interaction with things around her/him. The process is described as follows:

The formation of purposes is a rather complex intellectual operation. It involves: (1) observation of surrounding conditions; (2) knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by reflection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience; and (3) judgment, which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify. A purpose differs from an original impulse and desire through its translation into a plan and method of action based upon foresight of the consequences of action under given observed conditions in a certain way. (Ibid, 69)

Like the symbolic interactionism theory, observation is a capability for learning. What makes the experiential learning theory different lies in the experience, the previous knowledge, which has the quality of continuity, binding itself with the following experience. The learners employ experience as background knowledge to judge the following situations.

Kolb (1984) adopts this concept, and developed a model of experiential learning, which is 'a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour' (20). It is embedded with four interdependent constituents: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and subsequent active experimentation. Learning occurs when a person is involved in new experiences, then s/he observes and reflects on them from different perspectives. Later, s/he conceptualises what has been observed and reflected and integrates and formulates it into theories, which finally will be used to make decisions and solve problems. Kolb believes that experiential learning is a process imbued with tension and conflict, and occurs in a cycle. New knowledge and skills are achieved through the merging of the four constituents.

Much learning occurs along the process, and teachers learn from their experiences, creating a model for them to reflect on it in comparison with new experience. Then, teachers conceptualize the information, deriving a judgement as a result, and experiment with it in the practical context. As a consequence,

teachers gain insight into their practice. However, a notion of shared learning, and learning within the community is lacking. This is pointed out by Roberts (1998), as effective learning needs a 'dialogue' which serves as 'a bridge between privately constructed meaning and social activity.' Researchers such as Thatcher (1990), and Knezevic and Scholl (1996) assert the importance of reflection, but they need to talk or discuss about that experience to other teachers in order to gain shared understanding of concepts, shared meaning and shared experience of learning (Brown and Palincsar, 1989).

Moreover, Boud and Walker (1990) argue that the model neglects, firstly, the particular contexts that structure the individuals' experience in different ways, and secondly the influence that different personal perspectives, such as histories, learning strategies and emotion, has on each individual in the process of learning from experience. Boud and Walker (1990) believe that the individuals set up a preparation for experience, observe and mediate in the experience, re-evaluate it, and pay attention to the feelings arising in experiencing. The observation, and the intervention in a particular experience, take place in response to the context and are constituted by the individuals' attitudes. In their argument, Boud and Walker (1990) show how learning takes place through the recalling and evaluating of experiences in these four stages, consisting of associating the new knowledge to the existing concepts, integrating the new into the existing knowledge, appropriating the new knowledge by personalizing it, and finally, validating new ideas and feelings of the experience. Boud and Walker emphasise the personalisation of the experience, but do not consider that personalised experience can be shared in the community, and can become generalised when validating it.

Field and Macintyre Latta (2001), and Weinsheimer (1985) agree with Boud and Walker (1990) that in the path of learning from experience, one has to encounter negative counterparts, namely endurance and suffering. S/he has to accept and submit to experience, and become disoriented and reoriented in accordance with a new situation and, consequently be transformed. This happens when a person is open to experience by questioning her/himself,

intentionally and directively, and aims for new possibilities for her/himself and for others. Becoming experienced goes beyond technical skills and conceptualisation. It is the state of becoming keen in discernment, and in making appropriate decisions (Field and Macintyre Latta, 2001). Becoming experienced demands active involvement with the circumstance, an awareness of potential meanings, and an attempt to take risks in order to gain practical wisdom (Britzman, 1991; Dewey, 1938). However, this awareness must be cultivated along with the ability to maximize the experience by interpretation and taking risks (Britzman, 1991). Then ‘knowing’ occurs, but knowing should be developed and sustained because it ‘is temporally conditioned’. To make knowing grow, one must be aware of and perceive meanings in varying circumstances (Boistvert, 1998: 25).

In conclusion, learning from experience is a process of involvement in situations by interacting with situational factors, with full awareness and critical reflection. To ‘know’ is to be ‘open to experience’ and ‘radically undogmatic’ (Gadamer, 1996) so that ‘being mindfully in touch with self, others and the concrete particulars—the *subjects* that matter in our lives—becomes a real possibility’ (Field and Macintyre Latta, 2001: 10). For teachers, to learn from experience is also to cultivate ‘practical wisdom’—the ability to see subtle and important nuances in teaching episodes and allow ‘the mental faculty...to make contact with the other sides of things’ that cannot be sensed directly--‘the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible’ (Abrams, 1996: 58). However, experience can become knowledge for the new knowledge only when the teachers become aware of possible meanings in the normal context. The process of accommodation and assimilation from experience may not arise when working in a routine context and seeing no novelty in it.

### **The theories of social learning**

Social learning theories can be applied to approach teacher learning since they emphasise the interaction between individual and societal factors and, within this interaction, social learning concepts provide fundamental assumptions to

explicate human behaviours in terms of ‘a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental determinants’ (Bandura, 1977: vii). There are two distinctive aspects that are useful to teacher development. First, people possess self-regulation as one of their attributes. Self-regulation enables the individuals to, firstly, ‘select, organize, and transform the stimuli that impinge upon them’ and secondly self-directedly ‘exercise some influence over their own behaviour’ (Ibid).

Bandura (1977) sees that cognitive behaviour is activated and maintained by motivation, which originates in two sources: the thought related to future consequences, or ‘cognitive representations of future outcomes’, and the ‘intervening of influences of goal setting and self-regulated reinforcement’ (161). The individuals are capable of setting and defining specific goals to regulate their efforts to accomplish them. However, Bandura does not see that motivation is inborn. Instead, it arises from the individuals’ perception of discrepancy between the set goals and their capabilities. Often, the individuals create incentives for action of accomplishment through ‘subgoal attainments’ which ‘provide the self-satisfactions that reinforce and sustain one’s efforts along the way’ (162).

In his later work, Bandura (1994) stresses the significance of ‘perceived self-efficacy’ referring to

People’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such ‘beliefs’ produce these diverse effects through major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. (1)

The self-beliefs of efficacy constitute a mechanism that activates the self-regulatory process. These beliefs are overarching in explaining psychological processes of human functioning. In the cognitive process, the people with high self-efficacy beliefs can make positive predictions of future events, and remain firm on their performance in the activity involved. They exercise their

predictive judgements, test and re-evaluate them, and select alternatives in relation to anticipated results.

In motivational processes, self-efficacy beliefs influence the way people evaluate their motivation, the value of the outcomes, and goal enhancement and challenge. Perceived self-efficacy beliefs influence how people cope with their emotions and threatening activities (Bandura, 1994: 3). This explanation on the influence of self-efficacy beliefs on the choices people select is very interesting, and may be applicable in response to the decisions people make in the course of their development. The beliefs add a higher level of certainty to their choices, and add conviction in their possible abilities to succeed. More importantly, Bandura affirms that the beliefs that influence choice behaviour 'can profoundly affect the direction of personal development'. The efficacious people 'cultivate different competencies, interests, and social networks that determine life courses' (6).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the social learning theories and studies is that perceived beliefs in self-efficacy play the important role of generating motivation to become involved in development. The beliefs activate motivation, render an appraisal of one's capacity, and make deliberate judgements on the choices. The beliefs are positive attributes that need cultivation. In respect to teacher development, beliefs account for the teachers' self-directed decision for professional growth. This aspect will be investigated further in the thesis.

### **Constructivism**

Constructivism is derived from Piaget's reference to his views as 'constructivist' (Moallem, 2000). It emphasises the knowledge construction process, in which the individual negotiates the meaning of experiences encountered. In this negotiation, the learner uses her/his existing schemas to create new understandings of the phenomena. The key feature of constructivism is in line with social interactionism since the learning or meaning making

process relies on social interaction and collaboration (Tynjala, 1999: 8). Points of emphasis in constructivism are that

- Learning is learner-generated. Therefore it is subjective and personal;
- Learning is socially and contextually-based. Knowledge is shared and distributed, and examined to increase understanding;
- Learning is considerably influenced by the learner's awareness of development;
- Learning involves the learner's metacognition. Reflection should be used in the entire process (Glatthorn and Fox 1996: 5-6)

Of all the principles in learning, constructivism clearly places significance on the learners' awareness, the nature of learning as being subjective, involving personal aspects, and the situations in context.

In respect to the teachers' informal learning, their awareness plays an important role in motivating them to learn, and the novel and problematic situations in their practical situations also stimulate them to find better approaches to teaching. The learning process within this perspective is a repetitive, and on-going, interaction between the teachers' perception and the particular situations. This process will give rise to the teachers' awareness in feeling the need to find out what should work in such situations.

As pointed out earlier, one should not favour one mode of learning over the other, since the knowledge and skills gained from the two modes can reinforce each other in renewing teaching. In the case of EFL teachers, formal professional development courses provide language input through interactive experience with experts. This can enhance the teachers' English proficiency. Theoretical knowledge for formal courses can enhance their experience and invigorate their teaching and informal learning. Meanwhile, informal learning can result in stimulating the teachers to gain self-awareness and understanding into their particular situations (Kumaravadivelu, 2001.)

## **2.4 The acquisition and development of knowledge and competence of EFL teachers**

In discussing how the EFL teachers have acquired and developed their professional knowledge and competence, it is essential to consider two vital issues: EFL teacher knowledge, and sources providing professional knowledge and competence to them.

### ***2.4.1 EFL teacher knowledge***

In the context of this study, which is Thailand, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) relates to the role of English and English teaching in a non-English speaking region. Although these terms EFL, ESL (English as a Second Language) and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) indicate certain different roles and contexts, they reflect associative concepts in the studies and practice in English language teaching. The knowledge for teaching English as a foreign language is both evolutionary and controversial due to trends of thought and practice in English teaching methodology, in English teacher education and development, and in professional practice. EFL teacher knowledge is comprehensive, and the domains of this knowledge have not been adequately analysed and presented.

In reviewing the studies concerning the knowledge of English language teachers, two perspectives appear prominent. The first is on the knowledge that is required for the teachers. This is the knowledge employed in the preparation of teachers, or is deemed necessary for the teachers to have by educators or teacher developers. The other is on the knowledge in use in the teachers' actual practical context. This is gleaned, cultivated and refined from acquired and personal knowledge and experience from their work. The following discussion will follow the two perspectives which lead to the classifying of the EFL teacher knowledge into two types: the required EFL teacher knowledge, and the EFL knowledge in use.

Works on teaching English (Rivers and Temperley, 1978) demonstrate the two correlative aspects of knowledge and competence the teachers need to possess: cognitive and performative. Linguistics is considered as cognitive knowledge, being knowledge about the English language, whereas performative knowledge is the 'know-how' employed by the teachers for the task of developing the learners' performance. Apparently these two aspects of knowledge are overly simplistic and should not be taken as essential knowledge of teaching since such knowledge should cover both the cognitive and affective aspects of language learning, including the need to learn both the language and its context of use (Richards, 1985).

In a non-English speaking context where English becomes mandatory in the school curriculum at every level, and where its role tends to be a medium of communication in enterprises, English is both 'the medium and the object of learning' (Tsui, 2003). Therefore, there should be additional, significant aspects other than the linguistic and the language teaching methodology knowledge. In following the assumption of the first type, the required or taken-for-granted EFL knowledge, certain domains of knowledge can be perceived. They are described as follows:

### **The required EFL teacher knowledge**

The nature of required EFL knowledge is characterised by the balance of theoretical and methodological domains of knowledge. Not much change has occurred in the concept of teaching English. The theoretical knowledge consists of linguistics, language learning and acquisition theories, discourse analysis, text analysis in educational settings, inter-language syntax, phonology, and sociolinguistic knowledge (Richards, 1987; Clair, 2000). Methodological knowledge is the 'know how' that covers teaching methodology and practicum, namely pedagogical grammar, curriculum and testing, and classroom-based research (Richards, 1987).



Different perspectives of the English language present certain assumptions about the required EFL knowledge. The first assumption is from Woods (1996), who discusses the relationship of language, language learning, and language teaching. As language, English consists of genres, such as general English, English for academic purposes, and English for specific purposes. In teaching these genres of English, teachers should know the content of the different genres of English. They should have discreet skills in using English in these genres, as well as the related methodology. The issues of language learning and language teaching indicate English as knowledge to be mastered by teachers as the object and medium of teaching. In this sense, knowledge consists of all aspects of linguistics, communication strategies, and strategies for the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Moreover, English promotes further ability, meaning the use of English in these four skills, and several micro skills such as guessing meaning from context or articulating sounds, or composite skills such as note-taking.

The second assumption is from Tsui and Nicholson (1999) whose explanation reflects their perspectives on ESL knowledge as being delineated in a similar way to Shulman's (1987) categories of teacher knowledge. The authors equate the subject matter knowledge to the knowledge of the language system, namely phonology, lexis, grammar and discourse. The pedagogical content knowledge, language learning strategies, and language teaching strategies are the subject matter knowledge. Pedagogic knowledge is equal to the management of learning and resources.

It can be noted that Tsui and Nicholson's representation of ESL knowledge, unlike Woods (1996), does not include the ability of using English, which should be considered as one of the most important forms of knowledge and skill in teaching. This may be due to a difference in status of ESL and EFL. Since the ESL teachers are regular users of English, English proficiency is not explicitly taught or developed, whereas in teaching EFL, the development of the four skills go alongside linguistics and the methodological knowledge.

The ability of using English is of relevance in this study since in the EFL context, where a majority of teachers are non-native speakers and the students depend mainly on interactions with teachers and peers in simulated situations, teachers' deficient knowledge of and ability in English can be threatening to the development of students' skills. When professional development occurs, it is unavoidable that the teachers' English language ability is developed side-by-side with teaching competence.

The requirement of EFL knowledge as a body in which teachers should be proficient reflects a failure to regard the individual aspects of teachers who have their own knowledge of teaching, and individual teaching methods (Richards, 2002). Within the perspective of required knowledge, teachers are classified into similar groupings, and a body of taken-for-granted knowledge that the teachers should acquire is imposed on them. This perspective simply ignores the role of the individual system of 'interwoven beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge' that plays in the teachers' practice. Additionally, the interplay between the personal system and the context of use has not been accommodated.

### **The EFL knowledge in use**

The EFL knowledge in use is asserted by scholars and studied by researchers in education and the field of English language teaching. The language teacher knowledge proposed by scholars tends to be of a generic nature. However, the knowledge proposed by Freeman (2003) is striking, and relevant to the nature of that managed by the teachers. It consists of three broad spectrums: knowledge of the English language, knowledge of the world, and knowledge in context. This indicates the practical side of what teachers really need in their work. Knowledge in use is a mixture of theoretical knowledge, knowledge in the wider context, and knowledge in the specific work context.

Regarding the first spectrum of the knowledge in use by EFL teachers, knowledge of the English language--apart from linguistic domains--the ability to use the English language should be included. Met (1989) stresses that a high

level of language proficiency in all the modalities of English is needed, as well as the ability to use language in real life contexts for both social and professional purposes. This is due considerably to the impact of the view that English should be taught and learned in a meaningful way, and the general acceptance of the approach of communicative language teaching. This dominant approach requires from the teachers a high level of English knowledge in order to be an English language resource, and that they are able to facilitate the communication process among learners in the classrooms, thus promoting the communicative competence for communication in real life contexts. The teachers' language proficiency within the spectrum of English language knowledge is interactive with the other two: the knowledge of the world and the knowledge in context. The three spectrums together render teacher knowledge as contingent, socially embedded, developmental with internal logic, and non-sequential (Freeman, 2003).

Much research on EFL teachers' practical knowledge seems to neglect the teachers' English language proficiency. Always explicit is the subject content and the pedagogical content knowledge. As the core teaching knowledge, English language ability signifies two things: an understanding of how English is structured in order to make meaning, and the ability to communicate (Mountford, 1987).

The notion of the teachers' language proficiency or knowledge of language as crucial in practical knowledge has been recognised by second language educators, such as Edge (1988), Wright and Bolitho (1997), Andrews (2001; 2003); and they have introduced the term 'teacher language awareness' to explain how language proficiency functions in the teaching context. 'Language awareness' signifies the 'underlying systems of the language that enables teachers to teach effectively' (Thornbury, 1997 :x). Andrews (2003) points out that language proficiency (the knowledge of language), linguistic knowledge (knowledge about language) and the ability to handle language learning in the classroom are the core knowledge base in language teacher knowledge. The term 'teacher language awareness' is characterised as

metacognitive, involving an extra cognitive dimension of reflections upon both knowledge of subject matter and language proficiency, which provides the basic tasks of planning and teaching. . . [It is] an awareness from the learner's perspective, an awareness of the learner's developing interlanguage, and an awareness of the extent to which the language content of materials/lessons poses difficulties for students. (86)

Andrews (Ibid: 91) highlights that teacher language awareness as teachers' professional knowledge that engages the knowledge of language with other practical knowledge aspects, namely pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and knowledge of the context. A point of note at this stage is that teacher language awareness as proposed here is exclusive of the teachers' affective dimensions in the practical knowledge. Most literature in language teacher development does not adequately address the issue of teacher language awareness as being important in teachers' management of learning, as well as in their own cognition.

The issue of teacher language awareness is relevant to this study as, according to Edge (1988), being non-native speakers, EFL teachers have to take three roles: first, the English language users who should have an adequate level of English proficiency, second, language analysts who are able to understand how language works, and third, language teachers who are able to manage opportunities for language learning in the classrooms. The teachers' professional awareness is related to these roles in which language awareness and language proficiency play an important part.

Teacher language awareness in teaching EFL can be explained in a more meaningful way based on Dewey's (1902, cited in Wilson et al., 1987) idea of the difference between the understanding of the subject matter and the specific developed understanding of selecting materials and techniques for the subject matter. Dewey states that when being concerned with subject matter, the teacher has to 'induce a vital and personal experience' and the subject matter should be dealt with as a 'related factor in the total and growing experience'

(106). In terms of EFL teacher knowledge, language awareness is the process in which the teachers employ their language experience to examine their knowledge of the language and bring language items into use appropriately within the teaching contexts. The process is active and involves personal experience, while also enhancing it. This also explains how language awareness becomes a cognitive process for teachers.

The EFL teacher knowledge has been investigated further to clarify and ascertain its practical aspects. Foci of research works were placed on different issues concerning the teachers' practice in the process of teaching inside and outside the classrooms. The studies have revealed interesting characteristics and aspects of the practical English teaching knowledge managed by the teachers. The typical characteristics of this knowledge agree with those mentioned by Freeman (2003). Knowledge is a blending of propositional knowledge, knowledge appropriated for specific use in specific contexts, and personal beliefs, conceptions and emotions. It is not a reflection of the knowledge use, but a reflection of their learning to teach. Grossman's (1991) study on secondary English teachers' pedagogical content knowledge shows different domains of knowledge affecting their decisions when planning. She identifies the content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of curriculum, and knowledge of context. A significant aspect of the practical knowledge, besides the mentioned knowledge, is the teachers' awareness of the context, namely the student, colleagues and department policy.

A study by Gathbonton (2000) presents the patterns of pedagogical knowledge in experienced teachers. More specific patterns of practical knowledge are revealed. The knowledge is in connection with the teachers' intended and on-going teaching actions. Predominant knowledge in relation to the teaching actions can be summed up in five categories (42):

1. Knowledge of how to manage specific language items for students in relation to handling language items.

2. Knowledge about students and their knowledge in relation to factoring in student contributions
3. Knowledge about the goals and subject matter of teaching in relation to the teachers' decision on the contents of teaching
4. Knowledge about teaching and teaching processes in relation to facilitating the instructional flow
5. Knowledge about assessing student involvement and progress during the lessons in relation to supervising student progress.

Gatbonton's (2000) study is an analysis of knowledge in association with particular teaching actions, but the analysis is not concerned with how knowledge has been acquired, or formulated.

Research work in EFL teacher knowledge tends to acknowledge more the influence of teachers' personal aspects in Golombek's (1998) work. It reveals that teachers' personal, practical knowledge falls into four categories: knowledge of self, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction, and knowledge of context. Knowledge of self refers to the teachers' identities formed from teaching and personal experiences. Knowledge of the subject matter is drawn from the discipline, which is made relevant to classes, knowledge and experiences gained from formal classes and lectures when being learners, as well as other experiences contributing to their understanding of second language teaching and learning. Knowledge of instruction is both general and specific pedagogical knowledge developed to make their teaching appropriate to their goals and students. It covers a wide range of matters involved in the teaching process, such as the role of teachers and learners, evaluation, teacher-student interaction, teaching objectives, and lesson planning. Knowledge of contexts refers to the time, place, institutions, and sociopolitical environment influencing teaching and the teaching role.

Furthermore, Golombek (1998) found that affective aspects of teachers' practical knowledge are prevalent in their narratives, namely tensions and their concern to manage them. This same study also manifests how personal,

practical knowledge is integrated into teachers' practice. This knowledge 'guides teachers' sense-making processes, and informs practice by giving a 'physical form to it' (459). Personal, practical knowledge reflects the way teachers understand and respond to their classes. It is 'mediated by their experiences as teachers, learners, and persons outside the classroom; personal and interpersonal factors, and values, as well as their professional knowledge' (459).

Johnson's (1996) study agrees with Golombek (1998) in pointing out the influence of teachers' personal aspects, especially their tensions, in their practical knowledge. The affective aspects reflected in teacher knowledge include their tensions arising from teaching, their conceptions and insights as teachers into the dilemmas of teaching, an awareness of the students' learning environment and needs, internalisation of their own limitations, self-awareness, and professional ideals (Moran, 1996). The affective aspects of practical knowledge are defined as emotional control, sincerity, and self-examination. These aspects are essential principles for teaching behaviours which motivate and enhance students' learning (Bailey et al. (1996). Teachers' devotion to creating a close-knit and mutual relationship between students and themselves can generate a positive atmosphere that leads to the improvement of students' learning.

Tsui's (2003) case studies of four ESL teachers in Hong Kong, designed to investigate expert ESL teacher knowledge, clearly manifests that EFL/ESL knowledge in use is personal and varies according to each teacher and her/his classroom contexts. Focusing on the teachers' management of learning in the classrooms, Tsui (2003) identifies a range of knowledge and skills such as handling classroom discipline, organisation of learning, management of learning resources, motivating students, and enacting the curriculum. This case study approach offers an in-depth insight into knowledge practiced in context.

Interestingly, Tsui (2003: 66) states that these are the four typical features of practical knowledge in English language teaching.

1. It is integrated as it facilitates the ability to integrate teaching aspects, and the range of knowledge used in teaching.
2. It reflects the teachers' personal conceptions of teaching and learning impacted by their personal lives, learning, and professional development experiences.
3. It captures the two dimensions of pedagogical content knowledge: the management of learning and the enactment of the curriculum.
4. It is the result of a 'dialectical relation between teachers' knowledge and their world of practice'. This lies in the teachers' reflection on and interaction with the context of practice.

It can be evident from the study that teacher practical knowledge does not exist in delineated domains, but in integrated forms. The knowledge embodies acquired and constructed theories, understandings, the practicalising of theories and the theorising of practice, including the teachers' perceptions of clues in their interaction with the context.

To summarise, in this section EFL teachers' knowledge is categorized into two types: the required knowledge, meaning the theoretical knowledge achieved formally from academic programmes and formal courses on teaching English, and the practical knowledge, meaning professional knowledge teachers developed through their informal learning in their practical context. Both forms of knowledge exist inseparably in the teachers' knowledge repertoire, consisting of the knowledge of language or language proficiency, linguistic knowledge, language awareness, pedagogical knowledge specific to the content and the context, and affective aspects constituting decisions on choices of teaching actions. However, the practical aspects of EFL teacher knowledge gain much attention in the study of teachers' knowledge since they constitute the application and further development of the teachers' professional knowledge in regular practice. Therefore the nature and different characteristics of practical knowledge have been presented in order to show the important aspects which are influential on teachers' learning.



#### ***2.4.2 The acquisition of EFL professional knowledge***

In EFL professional development the concept of knowledge transfer, and the concept of teachers being receivers from outside experts have been put into practice in the INSET courses worldwide. In the Rajabhat context, according to an interview with a former supervisor, the policy implemented was to organise training or workshops according to changes, such as a change in the role of the institution, and a change in the curriculum. The teachers' needs were addressed by the supervisor who, within her duties, informally surveyed the needs of the teachers through her contacts and work with them. In this mode of professional development, individual needs were second to objectives and institutional policies. The teachers, although considered receivers of knowledge, may not feel opposed to formal professional development courses due to the following reasons.

First is the intention to advance their career. Explanation on this reason can be gained from the study of Burke and McDonnell (1992), who describe this intention as a characteristic of a 'competency building' stage in the teacher career cycle. In this stage, teachers seek security in their career through the acquisition of knowledge in order to develop their expertise.

The second reason can be derived from personal needs, such as personal enrichment. The studies of Burden (1982); Feiman and Floden (1980); and Burke and McDonnell (1992) reveal that teachers participated in professional development activities because they follow their 'growth demands'. Their continual professional development was 'based more on interest than on any deficiency in their professional repertoire' (Burke and McDonnell, 1992).

Included within the category of personal needs is professional awareness, which encompasses several issues concerning the practical aspects of teaching, conceptions of professional ideals, personal values and beliefs, and affective dimensions, such as tension. Research indicates that the teachers' professional

awareness takes many forms, namely tension arising from the feeling of 'stagnancy', enthusiasm to fulfil the effective EFL teachers' role (Moran, 1996), and dilemmas from the limitations in the 'customary' practice (Tsui, 2003). In his study on the INSET course for teachers of English in Thailand, Hayes (1997) points out that the teachers reached a career 'watershed' stage where their teaching life became 'sterile', and they wanted to regain 'momentum and enjoyment from teaching' (84). In the same study, Hayes (Ibid) found that another teacher participated in the training because she was under 'socialisation pressure' from the school and department. The teacher wanted to 'know what they know'. The teachers do not only feel aware of the mingled emotions that stress their professional conscience while managing their practical knowledge, but they also feel the need to search for challenges, and the necessity to upgrade their knowledge and skills for their socialisation comfort.

Third is the teachers' desire to develop their language proficiency. As mentioned earlier in the section on the EFL teacher practical knowledge, teacher language proficiency or the knowledge of language is a crucial domain (Andrews, 2003). Relatively, the intention to develop this knowledge should be found in the teachers' professional awareness since a good command of the language can help the teachers in the tasks of enacting the curriculum, conceptualising the language content in the subject matter, planning strategies for particular learning activities, and reflecting on the previous and subsequent teaching actions.

Due to the wide criticisms in terms of the relevance of knowledge to the teachers' practical situations, and negligence of personal needs, changes have been brought in to make the formal mode more acceptable to teachers, relevant to the context, and to link with students' learning. Nevertheless, teachers' adaptation of knowledge into their practice is still problematic, and thus the impact of formal professional development needs to be questioned. As a result of an evaluation of the impact, Hayes (1997) probed into the life histories of the participating teachers. He found that in-service teacher development should

take the perspectives of the teachers into account. Teacher learning occurs in a 'wider socio-educational framework' rather than a setting such as an off-site course. Hayes also proposes that to acknowledge teachers' learning is to 'give credibility to teachers' accounts' (Ibid, 5). Hayes' statement emphasises the teachers' personal dimensions and the socio-educational context of learning.

Teachers engage in searching for theoretical knowledge as well as improving their practical knowledge in both formal and informal learning activities to enhance their professional knowledge. The sources for teachers' learning are presented in the following section.

Tsui's (2003) study on ESL teachers in Hong Kong confirms the reinforcing power of the two modes of professional development. One teacher respondent in her study found that formal professional development provided her with opportunities to read professional materials, and to gain more input for teaching. Besides gaining knowledge useful for expanding her repertoire of teaching skills, she felt more confident. A remarkable change about her practice was that fresh input from the courses, time spent away from the classrooms, gave her the 'time and breathing space' to reflect on her work in a wider context. Being immersed in that experience remarkably affected her way of thinking. She was able to critically analyse the teaching problem rather than using intuition (95-103).

## **2.5 The impact of professional development on the thinking and classroom practice of EFL teachers**

Literature on teachers' professional development reveals these three themes relevant to the study.

- how scholars and researchers define teacher knowledge and its applicability to classrooms;
- the importance of a teacher's biography as an influence on teaching; methods promoting awareness and insight into the teachers' own

- teaching; and
- the role of the classroom in developing teacher knowledge.

### ***2.5.1 How scholars and researchers define teacher knowledge and its applicability to classrooms***

Three issues will be of concern in defining teacher knowledge: teacher professional knowledge, teacher knowledge base, teacher practical knowledge, and the applicability of knowledge to the classrooms

#### **Teacher knowledge as professional knowledge**

Eraut (1994) defines professional knowledge as practical and tacit. Within the structure of this knowledge, two categories are stated: propositional and procedural knowledge. Propositional knowledge consists of ‘discipline-based theories and concepts . . . generalisations and practical principles.’ (103). Procedural knowledge is the ‘know-how’, comprising of both knowledge and skill aspects. The first typical aspect is the ‘deliberative processes’ which are viewed as an amalgamation of propositional knowledge, situational knowledge, and professional judgement. In practice, practitioners employ this procedural knowledge, rely on contextual knowledge, predict the outcome of the action, encounter pressure of time and involve other people in the task. The other typical aspect of professional knowledge is the ‘metaprocesses’ which are characterised by self-knowledge, self-direction, and self-management. These characteristics enable the professionals to involve in an on-going evaluation of their actions (Ibid, 115).

Teacher knowledge can be viewed as having a basis in professional knowledge. It encompasses propositional knowledge, the how-to, and the personal affective aspects needed in evaluating their practice for improvement.

## **Teacher knowledge base**

Some researchers analyse the teacher knowledge base differently from Eraut. Shulman (1987) indicates that there is a knowledge base in teacher knowledge. Wilson et al. (1987) define this knowledge base as ‘the body of understanding, knowledge, skills, and dispositions that a teacher needs to perform effectively in a given teaching situation’ (106). The knowledge domains in teacher knowledge are delineated by Shulman (1987) as

1. Content knowledge referring to understanding of the subject matter;
2. Pedagogical content knowledge, the merging of knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogy;
3. Knowledge of educational aims, goals and purposes; contexts ranging from classrooms to communities.
4. Knowledge of general pedagogy, including pedagogical principles;
5. Knowledge of learners, of their characteristics, cognition, motivation and learning development;
6. Curricular knowledge, the understanding of study programmes and teaching materials for individual topics at a particular level.
7. Knowledge of educational contexts ranging from classrooms to communities.

Shulman has a similar view to Eraut (1994) in stressing the practical aspects of teacher knowledge. He states that pedagogical content knowledge is the most important because the ‘distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching’ are embodied in it. This knowledge can refer to the knowledge for practice.

Grossman (1995) has identified similar domains of teacher knowledge. Drawing on different studies of teacher knowledge by researchers such as Carter (1990), Leinhardt and Smith (1985), Wilson et al. (1987), and Shulman (1987), she presented five domains of teacher knowledge, namely knowledge of content, knowledge of learners and learning, knowledge of general pedagogy, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge of context, and knowledge of self.

Grossman (1995) places specific significance on personal aspects when she includes the knowledge of self in her categories, and defines that knowledge of educational contexts is derived from the personal domain, from teaching experiences, or from held beliefs. This shows an awareness of the existence of personal knowledge which works vitally in practical situations.

Turner-Bisset (2001) has further analysed the teacher knowledge base which consists of similar domains to those stated by previous researchers. For content knowledge, the author has delineated it into two aspects: substantive subject knowledge and syntactic subject knowledge. Also, the author includes beliefs concerning subject matter in the knowledge base for teaching. Substantive knowledge refers to the knowledge structure of a discipline, consisting of facts and concepts. Syntactic knowledge is defined by Schwab (1978 cited in Turner-Bisset, 2001) as 'the scientific method' or the procedures teachers employ to enquire and interpret new knowledge in experimentation within the community. Beliefs about the subject matter are emphasised as being important since this aspect of knowledge can indicate teachers' understanding or lack of understanding of the structures of substantive knowledge, and thereby generate negligence in trying new subject knowledge.

### **Teacher knowledge as practical knowledge**

Scholars do not view teacher knowledge as consisting of practical aspects, but fully assign epistemological aspects to it. Practical knowledge is not generated by experts, or transmitted from advanced learning. It instead consists of personal theories developed by teachers through their interpretation and application of professional theories in practical situations. van Manen (1991) termed it 'pedagogical thoughtfulness', explaining that it arises when action and thought are interchangeably functioning. With reflective capabilities, teachers identify and analyse the problems, then evaluate resources and critically select alternatives for specific problems.

Shulman (1987) describes it as ‘wisdom of practice’, meaning the maxims that ‘guide (or provide reflective rationalization for) the practices of able teachers’ (11). He further explains that knowledge in the wisdom of practice is vast, but it lies in the nonconscious level of those who know. Davenport (1997) terms it as ‘working knowledge’, and claims that it is very organically based on experience and context. His expression of the working knowledge that lies in experience, ‘ground truth, judgement, rules of thumb, intuition and values, and beliefs’, is in accordance with the procedural knowledge stated by Eraut (1994). Automaticity and intuition intervene in the use of the practical knowledge.

Davenport’s view of practical knowledge is in line with Tickle’s (1987) description that practical knowledge is experience dependent. For teachers, experience offers a means of understanding and ‘process for coming to understand teaching and learning.’ Through involvement in the process of experience, interactions with novel happenings in the environment, by making meaning, interpreting, sensitising and applying appropriate means of coping with their tasks, teachers gradually and continually formulate principles, assumptions and beliefs to direct their teaching (53). The views also echo Kolb’s (1984) principles of experiential learning. An implication arises that teachers’ practical knowledge is not only the knowledge teachers employ in practice, but also the knowledge base for the teachers to develop their learning.

Situated in experience and the work context, practical knowledge is considered ‘tacit’ with a ‘latent’ character, but holds, to a large extent, intellectual power in this knowledge. Polanyi (1958: 103) explains that practical knowledge enables one to cope with change by learning to adopt an anticipative stance to experience, and assimilate and adapt the novel to the existent conceptualisations of experience. The stance mentioned is similar to ‘the power of practical skills, ever keyed up to meet new situations.’ In this explanation there is an indication of intellectual power that supports the teachers to learn from previous experience and, through the adaptation, to the unknown while practising. Oakshott (1962) has made an interesting statement about practical knowledge in that it tends to be customary, but not unusual or special, and that ‘the mastery

of any skill, the pursuit of any concrete activity, is impossible without it' (8). Two points are made clear from the statements. Firstly, as practical knowledge is used at the nonconscious level, then it may happen that teachers may become unaware of the habitual use of this knowledge. As a result, no learning occurs. Secondly, the use of this knowledge, even repetitively, may not enable the teachers to master any skills if the practice and context are often customary. Therefore, Beckett (1994) adds that the use of practical knowledge at the professional level involves both doing and thinking; know-how and creativity. With these two aspects combined, expert practitioners actively participate in the situation, remaining alert for different ideas and new possibilities as solutions to their problems and enhancements to their work.

### **The applicability of knowledge to classrooms**

Teacher knowledge essential to the performance of teaching encompasses both explicit and implicit forms. To explore its applicability to the classrooms, an approach with a mindful and critical involvement is needed. Research on teacher knowledge has been conducted to probe into its application in the classroom, and to trace the relationship between knowledge and practice (Tom and Valli, 1990). Loughran (1999) suggests that it should be appropriate to trace teachers' knowledge through collaborative research conducted by the researcher and the teachers. This form of collaboration can generate an interactive mode of language between the researcher and the teachers. The language links the teachers' practice with their perception, as well as enhancing the process of perceiving their teaching.

A study of teachers' planning and teaching processes by Wilson, et al. (1987) depicts the teachers' professional base and how it is transformed into teaching. A model of 'pedagogical reasoning' is the result of the study. It consists of six basic components interacting in a cycle of teaching: comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection, and new comprehension. The preparation stage is comprehension, referring to the understanding of the subject matter. The teaching process is a transformation which involves critical



interpretation of the subject matter and materials, transferring the content into the classroom and appropriating the teaching process. Evaluation and reflection are the stages in which the teachers assess their learning, and evaluate their own practice. The last stage, new comprehension, is when the teachers gain 'increased awareness' of their teaching.

The cycle of pedagogical reasoning shows how the teachers use their knowledge in the classroom as well as how they learn to improve their teaching. One thing that seems to be overlooked is teachers' awareness which can occur before the stage of new comprehension. Biott (1992) comments that the cycle is an 'over-simplified circular sequence of discreet action and thinking', and it denies the 'possibility of insights occurring at unexpected times' (16).

An influential study of teacher practical knowledge was conducted by Elbaz (1983). She introduced the knowledge of self to reveal the underlying properties and components of teachers' cognitive processes. Her study focussed on the personal domain of teachers' knowledge relevant to teaching, and located the knowledge of self which refers to the teachers' awareness of their own beliefs, values, goals, views, personal dispositions, potentials, and defects. Knowledge of self is not theory-based. It is similar to the concept of *phronesis* or practical wisdom proposed by Aristotle (1925). Practical knowledge is categorised in five broad domains: the self, the milieu of teaching, the subject matter, the curriculum, and the instruction.

In order to organize this knowledge, teachers create three levels of general applicability, namely, 'rules of practice', 'practical principles' and 'images.' The rules of practice are statements of what to do or how to do it in a particular situation experienced in practice, acting as 'a guideline on or from which the teachers act' (1983:134). They are highly specific to a particular situation. Practical principles are claimed to be implicit, being developed from experience, theoretical viewpoints or from a combination of theory and practice. They are reflectively used, and thus able to direct the course of action.

Images are a combination of the three components. They are personal perceptions, characterised as 'open', undertaking different senses in each situation. They are disclosed through descriptive, metaphoric statements representing the essence of the perceptions, and used 'in an intuitive way to aid in the realisation of purposes' (135). In other words, they are the teachers' feelings, values, and beliefs. Elbaz indicates that the three levels of the structure are interrelated. The rules of practice and the practical principles constitute instructional knowledge, whereas images constitute practical knowledge.

In presenting her study on practical knowledge, Elbaz tried to prove that teachers' working knowledge is not a mass of knowledge mystically acquired from the chaotic and complex work of teaching. Instead, she clearly exhibits that this type of knowledge holds a form, structure, and specific attributes showing its sophisticated status as professional knowledge, and embracing both the cognitive and affective processes of the professionals who teach. Elbaz (1983) argues that the teacher holds an implicit theory of knowledge which informs her/his practical knowledge, and has an epistemological orientation (21).

A limitation of the study by Elbaz can be seen in the methodological area of the study that focuses on one teacher. Therefore, a practical implication is difficult to be drawn and generalised. Other teachers may not follow the same patterns of thinking in formulating their practical knowledge. However, her study has succeeded in revealing implicit dimensions of a teacher's cognitive process in constructing practical knowledge from the teacher's point of view.

The knowledge of practice is also presented by Clandinin (1985). The 'images' created by teachers construct different aspects of knowledge regarding teaching. These images are not consciously created, but arise particularly when teachers view their teaching situations. Therefore, the images become implicit assumptions which give direction to their practice. Later Connelly and Clandinin (1995) defined teachers' knowledge as 'that body of convictions and

meanings, conscious and unconscious, that have arisen from experience. . . and that are expressed in a person's practice' (7).

Research on teachers' thinking is conducted to probe their cognitive process and their task of applying knowledge in the classroom. Some researchers, such as Clark and Peterson (1986), claim that teachers' behaviour is considerably influenced and determined by their 'thought process', since their thinking is the cognitive process that determines their teaching actions in the classroom. Also, teacher thinking embodies different domains of knowledge employed in teaching.

Research work on teachers' thinking illustrates different aspects of teachers' action in relation to their thought process, such as decision making, awareness, sense making, and intention. Studies on teachers' decision making reveal that teachers have limits of tolerance in designating choices of routinised and alternative strategies in teaching (Peterson and Clark, 1978). The teachers' decision-making as ruled-governed and routinised is also asserted by Kwo (1994). Shavelson and Stern (1981) point out that teachers' decision making follows their observation of 'student cues', both verbal and non-verbal behaviours from the students. Experience plays a very important role in enabling the teachers to make more immediate reflective decisions while teaching (Sutcliffe and Whitfield, 1979).

Clark and Yinger (1987) have provided a summary of teachers' thinking in connection with their teaching. Firstly, teaching practice is based on what they have deliberately planned in terms of students, subject matter, teaching context, and teaching process. Secondly, the teachers' interpretation of curricula is vital to successful teaching. Thirdly, social and interactional skills are crucial in the teaching process in which the 'joint construction of meaning' should be an important aim. Finally, experience enables the teachers to organise the subject matter, the pedagogical knowledge, and social interactional skills in particular situations (98).

Woods (1996) examined ESL teachers' decision-making in planning English courses. He found that three influential factors - beliefs, assumption and knowledge - constitute teachers' interpretations of their teaching situations. These three factors are the knowledge base, or schemas employed in particular contextual aspects: students' abilities, the contents of the curriculum, events in the classroom, and the teachers' assessment of the conditions of the context. Furthermore his study reveals in the teachers' decision-making process that there is an interplay between the two types of factors: external and internal. External factors help teachers to make decisions concerning teaching processes, whereas internal factors assist teachers in managing to structure activities and pedagogical units in second language teaching. In this interplay, 'temporal and logical relationships' are taken into account when decisions concerning goals and outcomes take place.

Woods' (1996) study has presented the complex cognitive process teachers engage in when making decisions about teaching. However, the implications may not be applied in a context where English is taught as foreign language. In this context non-native speaker teachers find it very hard to be detached from the course book. The EFL teachers may base their planning and interpretations on different types of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge.

A recent longitudinal study based on in-depth case studies of the development of four teachers' pedagogical thinking has been conducted by Levin (2003), who followed a trail of such development for fifteen years. Levin framed her study on several works on the development of teachers' thinking about teaching, such as teachers' reflective orientations, (Zeichner and Liston, 1987; Zeichner and Tabanich, 1981; Zeichner et al. 1987; Bullough and Baughman, 1997), teachers' conceptions of their identities (Nias 1989), teachers' lives and works (Ball and Goodson, 1985) and teachers' learning to teach (Kagan, 1992). Unlike other studies, Levin does not focus on the teachers' classroom actions, nor does she want to look at the development in sequential stages. She intends to 'understand the complex nature of teachers' pedagogical understandings as they develop' over time (234).

In her study, Levin (2003) finds that the development of the pedagogical thinking of the teachers grew concurrently on two levels: 'on an inner level and also on a social level' (242). By inner level, her data shows that the teachers' pedagogical understandings changed and developed into more complex ways of thinking when they had to solve problems or when they confronted dilemmas. Input from outside sources can also generate this inner level of thinking development. This is possible when the new input is integrated into existing ways of thinking, or accommodated into their ways of thinking.

The internal level of pedagogical development can be achieved through 'inner dialogue', 'metacognitive thinking' when engaging in reflecting, and evaluating some ideas consciously. The social level of pedagogical thinking occurs when interacting with others, when involved in conversations about teaching or when maintaining connections with colleagues to learn more about teaching.

Also, Levin's (2003) work demonstrates some common factors found in the previous research work on teachers' thinking, such as the factors influencing teachers' pedagogical thinking. These factors are prior beliefs and values, professional experiences, and contexts of teaching. However, what she has found quite different from other researchers is that teachers' thinking is a learning process which grows or continually develops personally and socially in the context of practice. The development of teachers' thinking is influenced by their life circumstances. It is also supported by their social reference groups. This confirms that teachers' thinking correlates with their practice, and there is an unbroken line between their pedagogical thinking and personal reflective orientations. Furthermore, in terms of Levin's methodology, the longitudinal study has become a model of robust method for examining changes of teachers' thinking over time.

### **2.5.2    *The importance of a teacher's biography as an influence on teaching***

Teachers' personal lives are crucial to their practice, learning and development. Researchers have seen that teachers' personal lives are a valuable source of information about their personal, practical knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995), and how they use it. Biographical studies manifest an organic link between the teachers' personal lives, their professional learning, and practice. Educators who support this concept urge that there should be more studies on teachers' biographies and their impact on education (Lortie, 1975; Ball and Goodson, 1985). Further recognition of the 'teachers' voice' is urged since it has been found that several aspects of the teachers' lives are influential on their professional methods. Therefore, the teachers' voice should give an opportunity to present their knowledge in terms of practice (Elbaz, 1991; Goodson, 1992). In empowering the voice of teachers, the accounts of their lives, their sense of 'self', or the 'architecture of self' (Pinar, 1988; Hoyle and John, 1995), their ways of life, their critical incidents, which always influence their beliefs and practice, should be considered substantially in relation to their work.

Supporting the teachers' biographical studies, Oleson (2001) points out that one benefit of the biographical method is that it can be appropriately employed to probe the teacher's professional identity. This is an on-going process, comprising these elements: the teachers' practice within social interactions with others, and a cultural institution consisting of the profession as an 'institution . . . and a professional discourse (academic or habitual)'.

Biographical research reveals the 'subjective awareness' of the teachers' experiences. The teachers' stories capture contextual teaching factors and influences useful in an understanding of the nature of their knowledge, learning, their professional commitment and identity. The dominant methods claimed widely to be effective are the life history method, and the collaborative biographical method. In second language teaching, teachers' stories or

narratives are also widely used as a tool to reveal the tie between personal dispositions and previous experiences, and their commitment to their teaching role and development. In one of the studies, the teacher's professional identity is found to be prevalent. It is the result of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). Using the story of one participant as a means to capture the interconnectedness of life and work, Moran (1996: 127) has discovered that the teacher's practice was guided by her 'core values' and the sense-making of her role was directed by 'legitimacy', consisting of feelings, values, and practice. Her views of the students and learning activate her reflection on and provoke changes in her practice.

Autobiographies are an important tool for involving the teachers in reflection on previous experiences, the link between these experiences and their present practice. The purpose is to form a 'sense of ownership' in their professional development, and lead them to a better understanding of their own 'assets, beliefs, and values', and to help them improve their teaching (Bailey et al., 1996). Interesting themes revealed are the impact of teachers' high expectations on the students' achievement, and the impact of affect and atmosphere in class on the students' learning. Using autobiographies is recommended by the same authors as it encourages the sense of ownership in critically solving teaching problems. Through this teachers learn how to improve their teaching.

Teachers' stories used in the technique of narrative inquiry were also used in a study by Johnson and Golombek (2002). This study is a collaboration between the researcher and teacher. Interesting issues are captured as follows:

1. How teachers theorise their classroom inquiries;
2. How the professional and theoretical knowledge teachers obtain from academic courses is used in their professional lives;
3. How teachers struggle to create lessons and courses that reflect their ideas, philosophy and understandings;

4. How narrative inquiry can empower teachers;
5. How narrative inquiry can become a powerful tool in the language of teacher education; and
6. How collaboration with other teachers enables teachers to develop a better understanding of teaching and of teachers (ix).

In the stories of the participating teachers in Johnson and Golombek's work, the self and the work are closely connected. One teacher states, 'I am an amalgam of what I have experienced, read and taught' (Johansen, 2002). Her teaching experience is a conglomeration of 'thousands of conversations, hundreds of workshops, hour upon hour of working with students and other educators' (Ibid: 19). She sees herself as 'a traveller' that consults the 'guides'—resources and research information. Along the path, she has been experimenting with her teaching approaches, but with sensitivity to students' learning. She emphasises her philosophy of teaching: 'making a connection between [herself] and [her] students in a truly human way' (Ibid: 32).

Previous research works on biographical studies lead to a conclusion that the lives of teachers are central to their knowledge and practice. The biographical approach, in which collaborative interpretation is crucial, can identify 'the nature, sources and manner of evolution of the special kind of thinking, action and knowledge that pertains to their teaching' (Butt, et al, 1992: 51).

### ***2.5.3 Methods promoting awareness and insight into the teachers' own teaching***

There are two main approaches for promoting awareness of the teachers' own teaching. The first is by outside experts, such as researchers, or by collaboration between researchers and teachers. The other is through the teachers' self-awareness and self-reflection. This can be initiated by the teachers themselves, or extended further to a group or community in order that knowledge of practice, or problems, can be shared through dialogues, and insights can be



grasped. The common feature found in these two approaches is critical reflection.

There are many definitions of reflection in the literature. Most however agree that it is an active, conscious process. Dewey's (1933) definition of reflection is

An active persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends (<http://www.trainer.org/members/theory/process/reflection.htm>)

Working on this definition, Rodgers (2002) states the four criteria that characterise the concept of reflection are as follows:

1. Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas.
2. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society.
3. It is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry.
4. It needs to happen in a community, in interaction with others.

Reflection is asserted by Schon (1983) as essential in professional learning situated in time and context. Professional knowledge is not embedded with theoretical aspects, but with wisdom, talent, intuition, and 'artistry'. Therefore, rationalisation is not an adequate means to access and develop it. By artistry, Schon means the competence practitioners employ in coping with novel and problematic situations in their day-to-day work. This competence comprises a high level of skills in recognition and judgement. Competence can be observed, but cannot possibly be articulated. It is 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1967). It is learning 'to appreciate, directly and without intermediate reasoning' and to understand 'through the tacit sensations' (Schon, 1983: 23).

Another connected term is 'knowing-in-action' which refers to an observable action of knowing how to do things spontaneously and skillfully. Again to learn how to do this is tacit. Schon calls this 'knowing-in-action', which he describes as a 'more or less continuous process of detecting and correcting deviation from the line' (26). Knowing-in-action can be 'strategies, understandings of phenomena, and ways of framing a task or problem appropriate to the situation' (28).

Since routine practice is seldom a smooth process, unexpected events and outcomes occur. According to Schon, there are two ways professionals are involved in order to challenge and manage them. The first is 'reflecting-on-action'. This is when practitioners think back on what they have done, trying to find the causes of unexpected outcomes. The second is 'reflection-in-action' which is done during the action and, as a result, reshapes the task being done.

Critics of Schon have pointed out some limitations to reflection. For example Eraut (1994) challenges that, in reflection, awareness of tacit knowledge is raised, but the transformation of that knowledge is not usually immediate and thus unable to generate any productive change. Time is crucial in the process of transformation (Beckett, 1994). There is also confusion in the process of reflection-in-action. Moreover, 'recognition of a person', 'reading of the situation', 'awareness of tacit knowledge', and 'subjecting [the knowledge] to critical scrutiny' cannot be explained in propositional form (15). Gilliss (1988) comments on the matter of uniqueness in the practitioners' response to the situation. He cautions that

... there is a danger in the reflection-in-action approach of creating wholly idiosyncratic practitioners whose primary way of operating is to invent unique solutions to problems that (to them at least) are unique. Uniqueness, carried to extremes, is a barrier to the development and sharing of knowledge. (108)

Court (1988) doubts that, in actual practice, reflection does not conform with action at the same moment - there should be 'time outs'. 'Deliberation', Court suggests, should be a more suitable term as it describes the mental process that

arises during the action, and it focuses more on the activity of problem solving. Van Manen (1991) agrees with Court (1988) on the matter of time in reflection. He suggests that there is no time to reflect in action. Therefore, what happens during the action is more concerned with decision making. Reflection does not occur during action, but in 'stop and think' pauses, which are the same as reflection-on-action.

Despite disputes on Schon's views, his theory on reflection has generated a useful output on reflection in professional practice. The influence can be seen in the vocabulary of synonymous categories of reflection, such as reasoning, thinking, reviewing, problem solving, inquiry, reflective judgement, critical reflection (Moon, 1999), reflective practice (Kitchener and King, 1990), and reflective thinking (Barnett, 1997).

The following study demonstrates the approach of promoting the teachers' own teaching through a collaboration between researchers and teachers. McAlpine and Weston (2000) conducted a study based on generic orientation and Neufeld and Grimmett's (1994) principle that reflection on day-to-day experience can result in a growth in practice. McAlpine and Weston applied practical reflection since the focus of their study was on improving teachers' actions in particular classes. Six successful lecturers' knowledge construction processes were examined; how they monitored teaching actions to achieve goals; and how they made decisions to modify teaching actions. In this way, the researchers could explore how these lecturers turned their experience into knowledge through reflective practice. McAlpine and Weston (2000: 368) explain the roles of experience and reflection in their study as follows:

... experience is the base upon which the process of reflection is grounded. It represents the external actions of the teacher, the arena in which teaching is enacted, as the cognitions are transformed into behaviours. Reflection is visualised as the continuous interaction between actions related to teaching and knowledge.

The results show that the professors in the study relied most heavily on their pedagogical knowledge to monitor their teaching and decision making. These

professors monitored their teaching actions prior to, concurrent with, and retrospective to instruction. They tended to respond to cues concerning students' responses. Decision-making occurred to modify teaching actions relating to the method and content.

The professors in McAlpine and Weston's (2000) study relied on previous experience as their tacit knowledge source for monitoring and decision-making. McAlpine and Weston concluded that 'The depth and breadth of these various forms of knowledge influence the ability to construct goals, to create plans, to monitor, and to make decisions to change' (373). They stress that within the role of reflection in the improvement of teaching

[t]ransforming experiential and tacit knowledge into principled explicit knowledge about teaching requires, we think, intentional reflection for the purpose of making sense of and learning from experience for the purpose of improvement. In this way reflection requires linking existing knowledge to an analysis of the relationship between current experience and future actions or application. As such, reflection aids in pattern recognition and reconfiguring knowledge. The outcome of the process of reflection is the building of or expansion of knowledge. (375)

This study has provided a useful approach to investigate teachers' learning employing the reflective method.

In foreign/second language teaching there have been several attempts to understand teaching from the inside - the teachers' voices and the 'interpretative frames [they] use to understand and improve their own classroom practices' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990: 2). Since practical knowledge of EFL/ESL teaching consists of a high level of the teachers' personal and subjective philosophy of teaching, investigation into this domain is essential. As proposed by Richards and Lockhart (1994) critical reflection can reach the 'culture of teaching'. Richards (1996) has conducted a study on second language teachers and found the teachers' 'maxims', beliefs, or 'rules for best behaviour' guide the teachers in implementing their plans and motivate their decisions in the classrooms. Identifying these maxims can help the

teachers interpret and evaluate their own teaching. Richards (1990) claims that in the process of critical reflection the teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or opportunistic circumstances to a level where their actions are guided by critical thinking.

The self-awareness of teachers can be promoted through their reflective practice. Kumaravadivelu (1999) notes that practical knowledge is 'context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge' - it has to emerge from the teachers and their routine teaching. He urges that reflective practice is an inseparable dimension of the teachers' learning. Reflective practice enables teachers to take on the role of learners engaging in their autonomous learning in which teachers are able to 'theorize from their practice', and then 'practice what they theorise' (541).

This notion suggests a further move to a model of the 'teacher as researcher' and an orientation of 'action research'. This is a study from the practitioners' orientation employing the concept of reflection suggested by Schon (1987). Wallace (1996) points out that action research is a 'form of structured reflection', a method to 'look inward' for 'mentalist data' (39). It involves a cycle of 'planning, acting, observing and reflecting' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:79). However, Burton (2000) advises that action research should follow a clear goal, and an evaluative framework that can support systematic reflection on an issue of inquiry. Burton suggests that reflective teaching should be the core part of action, supported by 'over time' for professional renewal to be generated. The author provides important propositions for the basis of evaluative framework such as revealing bias in teaching, responding to the dynamic of teaching, confirming teaching action, and involving in durable and sustainable reflective processes.

As with other forms of teachers' learning, action research is recommended as collaborative when the inquiry becomes a community-based activity. This is a setting where teachers work and learn together through a 'discourse of teaching' which both 'facilitates their communication and understanding and acts as a means of sustaining it' (Ibid, 254).

Research on teachers and teacher research can reach the teachers' perception and understanding of their own knowledge. Critical reflection triggers them to understand how that knowledge is constructed and used. It also puts the teachers on an evaluative stance of their own practice on their quest for good practice as part of professional learning.

## **2.6 The role of the classroom in developing teacher knowledge**

From the classroom, teachers 'continue to develop their professional expertise' (Wallace, 1996: 281). Brown and McIntyre (1989) refer to 'craft knowledge' that is mainly acquired from their 'practical experience in the classroom'. Carter (1990) states that teachers' learning to teach connects directly to classroom practice. Similarly, Thiessen (1992) sees the teachers' own classrooms as their professional development base where teachers and students are interdependent partners in learning and development. This is because teaching is an activity of the 'social construction' of knowledge (Richardson, 2001). Teachers learn about and experience aspects of teaching at both macro and micro levels from rich, diverse and complex classroom contexts (Almaraz, 1996).

For the macro level, firstly, the classroom provides a clearer vision of the teachers' role, and relates this vision to teaching knowledge and experience, and knowledge about the students. These factors impact their management of effective learning (Johnson, 1996). Secondly, awareness of the classroom is simultaneously on two levels: the general and the particular. Teachers should attune to signals from the students in class. A balance between care and control is important (Knezevic and Scholl, 1996). Thirdly, the classroom is a source where teachers learn while coping with tension to generate productive teaching. Fourthly, from the classroom, teachers perceive a need for revitalisation and being self-resourceful, and teaching the values of a foreign language teacher (Moran, 1996). Finally, teachers gain an awareness of the learners'

characteristics, abilities and learning roles in English language learning contexts (Burns, 1996).

At the micro level, teachers learn to manage teaching actions associated with the tasks, such as evaluating and re-evaluating the tasks to meet specific classroom situations (Burns, 1996).

Teachers' learning from the classroom is effective when it connects with the students' learning, and their growth is in line with the students' achievement. Teacher learning triggers the teachers' awareness and then necessitates the change in teachers' beliefs and understandings, and thereby the achievement of the students (Turbill 1994; Fullan, 1990).

The classroom is the setting where the interaction between the two parties, the teacher and the students, takes place. The teacher brings her/his knowledge, personal philosophies, thinking, attitudes, beliefs and expectations. Likewise, the students also contribute the same aspects. The main concerns of the teachers are the students, but the interaction is not always productive. To transform the classroom into a resource of effective learning for teachers and students, several approaches have been provided.

#### ***2.6.1 Teachers' awareness of the students***

Teachers should be aware that students approach their learning differently, even in the same context. Students adopt the approaches that are related closely to their perceptions of learning situations, and their prior experiences of learning. As a consequence, the learning strategies the students adopt are also related to their learning outcomes.

Studies on teaching approaches and students' learning manifest both the discrepancies and congruence of teaching and students' learning. Congruence is found when the teachers regulate the students' learning processes (Vermunt and Verloop, 1999). In doing so, the teacher learns to diversify his/her role to being a diagnoser, challenger, model learner, aviator, monitor, and evaluator (20-22).

A study of teachers' perceptions of their teaching in association with their students' learning by Prosser and Trigwell (1999) reveals that the effort the teachers put in to encourage self-directed learning, and the time devoted for interactions with the students contribute greatly to the development of students' learning approaches. Their results assert that teaching and students' learning are inseparable, and the teachers' learning can indicate the teachers' actions. Teachers who adopt the 'conceptual change/student-focused approach to teaching' can generate higher quality learning outcomes (Ibid: 68).

However, certain contextual factors, such as large classes, heavy teaching loads and other responsibilities, may discourage the teachers from attuning to the students' culture in the classroom. Then, 'preferred approaches' may be adopted (Kember and Kam-Por Kwan, 2000). This notion puts forward an issue that teacher learning from the classroom is possible when it connects with the other contextual factors on a wider level.

An issue of the relationship between teachers' practice and students' learning outcome has been investigated further in the study by Martin, et al. (2000). Applying a phenomenographic perspective, emphasising the concept that 'knowledge is constituted in the relationship between the knower and the context, and attempt to bring their students into relationship with that knowledge through teaching in that context' (388). The researchers placed the scope of their research on the consistencies and inconsistencies between the teachers' intentions and their practice. They examined factors such as the subject matter related to the curriculum, the subject matter represented, the student understanding of the subject matter, and the student development of lifelong analytical skills through the study of the subject matter. The results



show that the teachers' intentions in teaching constituted the subject matter they wanted the students to know. In relation to students' learning outcome, the teachers' intentions in teaching should be an issue to be addressed first in priority, rather than the teaching strategies. This study emphasises the importance of the personal belief of teachers in relation to the subject knowledge and students' learning, but it does not focus on the students' reactions towards the specific subject matter knowledge the teachers have taught. Therefore, the holistic picture of the relationship between teaching and students' learning outcome cannot be seen.

Teachers' awareness of the students' learning can be derived from the students' feedback. Marsh (1987) claims that students' evaluations 'provide diagnostic feedback' to teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching. Nevertheless, Ramsden and Dodds (1989) argue that when the results of the evaluations are put into action, improvement of teaching can be possible. Ballantyne, et al. (2000) view the findings of the evaluations as important as they link the teachers' and students' perceptions to 'gain a better understanding of the whole process and context of teaching and learning' (231).

Teachers' awareness of the students can generate the relationship between teachers' knowledge with students' learning. Studies have shown that the point of emphasis in teaching and learning does not lie in how much teachers know, but in their intentions, or beliefs, and realisation that what they teach should impact students' learning. This awareness is very crucial to the teachers' interpretation of their practical context, which should address students' learning.

### ***2.6.2 Teachers' meaning perspectives***

The notion of meaning perspective stresses the issue of change in teachers' perceptions leading to change in teaching actions. It is based on Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning as embodying essential concepts of

experience and critical reflection. In the cognitive process, three levels of critical reflection on experience are involved. In a problematic situation, first, reflection is directed to the content of the experience. This, according to Mezirow, is not learning. Then, when an undesirable outcome occurs, existing solutions in the experience are consulted. At this level learning may occur, but not a deep level of learning.

Second, when ‘meaning perspectives’, or the held beliefs and assumptions acting as the individuals’ guiding principles are reflected upon, critical reflection arises. Third, in their reflection, when the individuals challenge the taken-for granted premises by seriously judging them, reflection can cause change in their perceptions (Mezirow (1991: 5)

Drawing on Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, Clark and Easen (1992) point out two issues crucial to the transformation of teachers’ meaning perspectives in their classroom practice. These two issues, ‘typification’ and ‘routinisation’, lie deep in the teachers’ assumptions. Routinisation, when seldom examined or re-evaluated, is difficult to change. The authors emphasise that these assumptions are what the teachers ‘do know’, and that teacher learning and development should be focused on facilitating the teachers to ‘find different configurations for their existing knowledge’ (40). This method, they believe, can help teachers to ‘make sense of or put meaning on what happens in the classroom’ (42). The transformation of the teachers’ meaning perspectives of their classroom practice can be achieved through these measures, based on Mezirow’s theory.

- reflecting upon practice, preferably in a systematic and rigorous manner
- acknowledging and questioning the assumptions underpinning that practice
- exploring other ways of interpreting what is happening what is happening (or might happen) in the classroom to get different perspectives or explanations of the experience; and
- trying out or ‘experimenting’ with other perspectives (and their concomitant practices) until confident in using one that seems to ‘make sense.’ (Ibid, 42)

These measures, recommended by Clark and Easen (1992), should be in line with an activity of collaboration amongst teachers

Meaning perspectives, for van den Berg (2002), are personal meanings closely tied with work contexts. Professional learning evolves from the teachers' interpretations of their experiences and the perceptions of their professional role and responsibilities. In interacting with these contextual factors, they 'construct temporary meanings with regard to themselves and their profession', and changes can occur (603).

### ***2.6.3 Collaboration as a source of insight into classroom practice***

Perspectives for meaning can be triggered in collaborative activities when conditions and opportunities are structured to examine new conceptions of teaching and learning. Collaboration is open to teachers in order to form a community, a context in which teachers 'work together to share knowledge through professional conversations with their colleagues for the purpose of improving professional learning' (Coronel et al., 2003: 125). Many studies emphasise conversations in the community as a significant instrument to generate changes. When teachers capture what should be judged and become uncertain about it, conversation can be

An instrument in the construction of meaning by the group members, provides a structure to think, to imagine and make choices and value judgements, to elicit and clarify tacit knowledge and to create connection, community and vision, and in short, to stimulate the commitment to developing professional communities dedicated to the construction of meaning within their lives and work. (139)

However, collaboration has to support and reinforce the teachers' reflective practice, and the teachers' process of meaning making. It should be a continual process, not temporarily established, since it should accord with the continuity of teachers' learning.

## **2.7 Limitations of the existing research in this field**

Literature on teacher learning in general focuses on two areas: teacher knowledge and teacher management in classrooms. Teacher knowledge has been categorised in many studies, all of which seem to recognise common characteristics. Prominent in these studies is Shulman's (1987), in which the teachers' knowledge base and the process of the teacher's use of that knowledge are presented. His emphasis on pedagogical knowledge and the process of 'pedagogical reasoning' stresses the teaching methods - the 'how to' aspects of the teachers' knowledge. Later studies, such as Grossman's (1991), acknowledge the teachers' personal aspects when their knowledge of the self has become one category in the teachers' knowledge domain.

The personal aspects, such as beliefs and affective dimensions, recently gained recognition as being influential and crucial factors in the teachers' cognitive process. Literature on EFL teacher development has attempted to place foci on different aspects constituting teachers' learning. Personal aspects have been given much attention in shaping the teachers' practice. Biographical methods are used to investigate influential factors on teachers' knowledge and practice. However, few have focused on teachers' learning in relation to their integration of knowledge in the classroom.

Relatively little has been done to probe all aspects of EFL teachers' learning, such as the teachers' individual dimensions which are influential on professional learning, their construction of professional knowledge, their application of practical knowledge in the classroom, and their deployment of the classroom context as a source for professional learning. Research perspectives and empirical results of these studies often fail to yield practical implications. For example, the use of a small number of respondents makes it difficult for the results to be generalised. Also, in an attempt to make an in-depth examination of the teachers' learning, researchers concentrate on a specific unit of analysis, thereby possibly excluding other relevant aspects in the process of the teachers' learning.

Despite the limitations mentioned, the review aims to present literature pertinent to the aspects concerning teachers' learning in order to achieve a holistic account of how EFL teachers acquire professional knowledge for their practice.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The review covers a substantive area of literature concerning professional development of EFL teachers. The six main aspects concerning teachers' professional learning and development are covered. They consist of current trends of professional development, influential factors contributing to the development, explanation of the nature of teachers' learning and the EFL teachers' learning processes the impact of professional development on teachers' thinking and practice, and finally the role of classroom in developing teacher knowledge.

The next chapter is concerned with the pilot study, demonstrating how concepts such as expertise, teachers' learning, and professional development were put on trial so as to find an appropriate scope as well as key premises underlying the study. The use of semi-structured interview method was explored.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE PILOT STUDY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the process of the pilot study, which occurred after the preliminary stage of study design and prior to data collection. It consists of eight sections as follows:

- Background to the pilot study
- Underlying key concepts
- Objectives
- Methodology
- The fieldwork
- Data analysis
- Findings
- Discussion of the findings
- The pilot study and its impact on the main study
- Conclusion

The details of each topic are discussed in turn in the following sections.

#### **3.2 Background to the pilot study**

Professional development falls into two modes: formal, and informal. The main perspective of the first mode is that teachers are receivers of knowledge transmitted from trainers in structured courses, whereas informal professional development is when teachers engage in ‘self-improvement and on-going learning’ in their usual context. (Baker, 1996)

Professional development of EFL Rajabhat lecturers was predominantly formal, as organised by the former Supervisory Unit, Office of Rajabhat Institutes. Most new, mid-career, and experienced lecturers participated continually in such structured courses, in the form of workshops, seminars, and conferences. Informal learning has been neglected as a mode of professional development. For experienced teachers, the two modes of professional development should strengthen each other and both should strongly impact the teachers' practice. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the effectiveness of professional development in relation to the lecturers' expertise and their practical context. Moreover, an investigation into learning and development derived from self-directed professional development is also needed.

### **3.3 Underlying concepts**

A review of the relevant literature concerning professional development and expertise provided these key concepts for the pilot study. Such definitions were employed in designing the study and in selecting the methods of data collection and analysis, including selecting participants. The definitions of the relevant key concepts are presented in the following paragraphs.

Exemplary lecturers are those who have shown or have been nominated by colleagues as having been continually involved in professional development to maintain their teaching performance on the level of expertise.

Professional development is defined as a long and arduous process of continual learning from 'an individual's experiences and transactions with his/her environment' (Tynjala, 1999: 360).

Expertise is acquired through 'deliberate practice, an effortful activity motivated by the goal of improving performance' (Ericsson and Charness, 1994).

The sense of professionalism is the teaching ideal, a factor driving lecturers to participate in on-going developments towards the goal of expertise. It refers to ‘an ideology, the status of profession, the strong sense of professional identity determined by how individual members of the profession perceive themselves, their roles, and their responsibilities, and how they are regarded by others’ (Nicol, 1996: 218).

### **3.4 Objectives**

In designing the pilot study, I expected to see a clear relationship between expertise and professional development in the two modes. I also anticipated the phenomena of professional development leading to expertise, which could be detected from exemplary lecturers and those who were performing a dual role of teaching and administering the English programme and the language centre. The pilot study was designed with these objectives:

1. To identify a sample of research participants for the main study;
2. To identify their perceptions of expertise and the exemplary qualities, beliefs, values, attitudes, and dispositions of expert lecturers in order to explore the relationship between these aspects and professional development;
3. To discover types of effective professional activities, which impact the development of EFL lecturers’ knowledge and competence.

### **3.5 Methodology**

#### ***3.5.1 Reviewing literature***

Once again I reviewed the relevant literature to find information which could support the assumption and could also be used as background information to formulate the interview questions. Significant issues emerged from the literature were as follows:



- Expert language teachers continually revitalise their teaching and language competence to retain ‘legitimacy’ as language teachers (Moran, 1996);
- Teachers’ sense of professionalism urges them to strive for teaching expertise and this striving is unique to each individual (Burton, 2000);
- Teachers’ professional commitment emerges inwardly from self-knowledge (Palmer, 1998);
- Teachers’ professional development should involve intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects (Palmer, 1998);
- Teachers and students jointly create a positive learning environment (Moran, 1996); and
- Collaborative research and reflection on practice are considered to be teacher development activities (Richards and Lockhart, 1996).

### **3.5.2 *Forming questions***

During the preparation stage, I formulated questions including the following categories:

- biographical events influencing their decisions about their teaching career;
- their education background and experiences, including participation in professional development activities impacting on their practice;
- their beliefs, values, and attitudes about teaching;
- their perceptions of the characteristics of expert teachers and teaching expertise;
- their typical, regular classroom actions, such as teaching techniques and approaches;
- their perceptions of reflective teaching; and
- their recommendations on expert lecturers who might be included in the main study.

### ***3.5.3 Selecting participants and applying ethical codes***

I contacted programme chairs, and directors of language centres, from different Rajabhat institutes. After obtaining consent from all five respondents, interviews were conducted with four programme chairs, and one language center director at Rajabhat institutes in Bangkok, Pathumthani, Ayutthaya, and Chachoengsao. The selection was driven by a purpose, and based on two major criteria concerning the context and qualifications of the participants.

Workplace culture is the first criterion considered as a contributing factor to the participants' motivation of professional development. Different workplaces probably constitute different types of environment which could generate or hinder professional development. According to the theory of symbolic interactionism, the individual and the context engage in an ongoing process of reciprocal influence (Lauer and Handel, 1977). Therefore, the participants can be affected by the institutional context in their decisions on professional development.

The second criterion is that the participants should be experienced lecturers or exemplary lecturers who have been recognised as experts in teaching English, or in training teachers of English. It is expected that the phenomena and process of professional development leading to expertise should be evident in these experienced lecturers. In fact, I contacted more than five lecturers, but only five were willing to be interviewed. The rest preferred to participate via questionnaires. This request would not be in accordance with my intention to conduct a trial via qualitative fieldwork. Therefore, five respondents were considered adequate.

The five participants became professional acquaintances through seminars, workshops and other appointed duties assigned by the Office of the Rajabhat Council. It was not difficult for me to establish a rapport with them. Firstly, rapport was generated via telephone contact in which my intention of recruiting them as respondents was stated. Within my Rajabhat, I had informally discussed

the study with a prospective participant, and requested her cooperation. During the first contacts, I informed them of the ethical codes which were to be followed. Their identities would remain anonymous. I requested a two-hour interview session, but this depended on their preference. We arranged dates and time for interview. An outline of the interview schedule was provided to the respondents. Agreement of all matters concerning the interviews was on a personal basis. This is conventionally practised in terms of 'informed consent' in Thailand.

### **3.6 The fieldwork**

For a period of five months, I conducted semi-structured interviews with five lecturers, each of whom have been teaching for more than 20 years. Two respondents worked in a Rajabhat in the east, one is in a province bordering Bangkok, another in Bangkok, and the other was a colleague of myself, but in a different programme. The respondents have been active in their teaching and other extra duties. They have continually developed themselves, both formally and informally.

In the interview, which lasted at least two hours, the same questions were asked of all interviewees, and they willingly cooperated to tell of their personal and professional lives. Information was written down with occasional requests for clarification and further accuracy.

Interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere. I took strictly the role of researcher, keeping an adequate distance in my observation and feelings by trying not to take things for granted. In the meantime I expressed, through my verbal expression, that I shared some feelings with them and understand their feelings in order to let them 'talk' as freely as possible. I also asked the respondents about the points that were not touched upon. The interviews were

not recorded as participants said they felt uncomfortable with this process. I took notes on their responses and asked for repetition and clarification from time to time. Some interviews lasted for three hours. Three seemed to be very open about their life histories, yet the other two tended to guard their personal lives and prevented further involvement in this area. Again, the same three participants willingly recommended colleagues who they recognised as expert lecturers with consistent professional development, but the other two were reserved in recommending anyone.

From the interviews with these respondents, two lecturers were recommended to be included in the main study. These individuals had persistently developed their knowledge and competence in order to make their teaching more effective. Again, these two individuals were proudly recommended by their colleagues. Other names were mentioned hesitantly, in fear that it was inappropriate to recommend others to participate in a research study. This cautioned me to try some other ways of identifying research participants of the main study.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

The collected data was transcribed during the fieldwork. Then the transcribed interviews were read thoroughly, with key words underlined. Categorised theme words were written above or in the margins. On a sheet of paper each categorised theme was written at the top as a topic, and key words relevant to it were listed underneath as illustrated below:

#### **Biographical events influencing their decisions about their teaching career**

- Piriya role as a regular tutor for her friends gave her confidence and made her decide to become a teacher.
- The death of Nada's father influenced her decision to study in a teacher education programme instead of going to university.
- Wanee did not reach the age requirement to enter nursing school, and instead she turned to a teacher college.

Data obtained fell mostly into the planned categories. Several new themes emerged. They were placed under these additional categories:

- qualifications of EFL lecturers;
- beliefs and attitudes about EFL learning;
- teachers' roles in developing students' learning;
- beliefs, perceptions and attitudes about professional development; and
- biographical aspects such as individual characteristics, personal experiences and family environment contributing to the enhancement of English competence.

### 3.8 Findings

#### 3.8.1 *The respondents' profiles*

The respondents are introduced briefly in this section. They will appear again when the details on professional development are presented under the heading: Professional development activities impacting on practice.

The five respondents preferred the use of pseudonyms when referring to them: **Nada**, **Panee**, **Piriya**, **Wanee**, and **Orn**. **Nada** was in early fifties. At the time she chaired the liberal arts programme in a Rajabhat located in the eastern part of Thailand. Her expertise is in teaching reading and literature. She has engaged in professional development in language and literature, the methodology of teaching English, as well as being extensively trained in the advanced level of English usage in short courses and academic programmes for higher qualifications overseas. She was continuing her study at a doctoral level on a part time basis in an Australian university.

Panee was in mid fifties, and chaired the liberal arts programme in a Rajabhat in central Thailand. Her Rajabhat is located about 70 kilometers from Bangkok. Panee was selected as an outstanding student to attend a teacher's college in a province near her hometown in the south. The year she entered a higher level of teacher qualification, she passed a test to obtain a studentship in the American Field Service Student Exchange Programme in the USA. Upon her return, she took up a teaching career in Bangkok, and continued her study at an undergraduate level. When she attained a higher qualification, she transferred to a teachers college in the Rajabhat university. A few years later, she was awarded a scholarship to attend a training course in New Zealand. Within five years, she advanced her study to a master level.

Her professional development was continual in both formal and informal modes. She worked to achieve an assistant professor title and became the first to do so in her department. She then earned an associated professor title in her final year of work before retirement. Again she was the first to receive it.

**Piriya** was in her early fifties and worked in a Rajabhat located in the central area, 17 kilometers from Bangkok. Previously she worked in a Rajabhat in the north. She was recommended by her colleagues as being involved in ongoing professional development both formally and informally. Piriya holds a master's degree in language and literature. In the north, she taught and ran a business in tourism. Her tour agent company was a venue for student apprenticeships, as well as a place for her learning. The business had become a successful one, as had her career. She attained an assistant professor title. Unfortunately, a critical incident occurred and she had to transfer from the north to her present Rajabhat. She was conscientious and devoted to her teaching duties. She regularly constructed and adapted materials for her courses. She was involved in any assigned work concerning the use of English. She preferred to work hard because this allowed her to learn and improve her professional knowledge and skills.

**Wanee** was in the same age group as **Nada**, and worked in the same Rajabhat. Wanee chaired the English education programme. She felt that she owed gratitude to the exchange programme that enabled her to learn about the sociocultural background of native speakers and improve her English language skills. Wanee has had extensive experience in attending courses overseas.

As a respondent for this pilot study, **Wanee** discussed her attendance of a doctoral course in an Australian university. Her institution was accelerating professional development of lecturers. Primarily, EFL lecturers were able to further their study on this level as they possess strong English skills.

**Orn** chaired a business English programme in a Rajabhat located in the north of Bangkok. She was in early fifties. She has taught in this Rajabhat for thirty years and holds a master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Her experience abroad was not as extensive as others, but she enjoyed being involved in duties concerning the use of English language. Besides chairing the programme and teaching, she was head of the international affairs of the institute. When her Rajabhat pioneered the business English programme, she decided to be retrained in order to teach courses in the curriculum, such as English for hotel business, English for secretarial work, and secretarial techniques. In these training courses, she did not only learn theoretical knowledge, but she also had to participate in then practicum. As she was so knowledgeable in English for hotel business, she was the only Rajabhat lecturer invited to write a section in a course book on this topic by the Thai Open University. Like other lecturers, **Orn** has been energetic in developing her professional knowledge, and does not seem to be tired of teaching.

### ***3.8.2 Major themes from the findings***

In the following sections, major themes which emerged from data analysis are presented together with incidents from their stories to support these themes.

***Theme 1: Biographical events show a very strong influence on the respondents' decisions about their teaching career.***

Two out of five lecturers did not intend to enter the teaching profession. **Wanee** planned to study in a nursing school, but she failed to meet the age requirement. Realising that the teaching profession can also contribute to society, she decided to become a teacher. Later, when she found that she excelled in English, she became an English lecturer.

**Nada** preferred to attend a university which was considered a more sophisticated institution than a teacher college. The death of her father altered her education and career plans.

The rest of the participants always intended to attend teacher education programmes in a teacher college and university. For **Piriya**, a choice of being a teacher of English comes from her confidence in helping classmates. **Piriya** frequently helped her friends with their English assignments. This gave her a lot of confidence. She became confident that she possessed a good command of English and effective teaching skills to be an English teacher.

***Theme 2: Educational background and experiences impact on the respondents' practice.***

Interesting aspects concerning the development of the respondents' knowledge and competence of English were demonstrated in their educational background and experiences as described below:

**Development from self-directed activities**

When examining their English competence development, **Nada** revealed her experience in secondary education without relating it to her teaching activities at school, but also told how she sought valuable sources for improvement



outside classrooms and through self-directed activities. She mentioned that she wrote down social studies notes in Thai, and searched for information on the same topic in English from an encyclopedia to enhance her English skills. Moreover, she joined a Christian church service to give herself an opportunity to participate in a free English course provided by the church. Her efforts paid off when she passed an English test to join the American Field Service Student Exchange Programme to the USA. In the following year she was able to pass the entrance exam for the recognised teacher education programme of a top university, and was placed in the advanced level group.

### **A dominant approach to develop English competence adopted by respondents**

A dominant and influential approach to develop English competence adopted by the respondents is frequent interactions with English-speaking teachers during their study in college. The interactions not only accelerated development, but also inspired them to excel in English. **Panee** and **Wanee** were two participants who proved that this approach was effective. They were awarded exchange student scholarships to spend one year in the USA. Their English competence and cultural awareness, as well as independent thinking, were immensely improved through such an experience.

### **Influence of former lecturers**

In seeking teaching experience, **Piriya** offered tutorial sessions to her classmates. As a preparation, she observed closely what methods lecturers employed to get the target content across to the students. Later she adapted the methods observed in classrooms to assist her friends. She was primarily successful in assisting their learning and helping them pass tests. Her friends' achievement brought her a lot of confidence, and encouraged her to be a teacher of English. This influence made her well aware that good lecturers or teachers

should focus on building strong relationships with students, through understanding them and encouraging their involvement in lessons.

**Nada** drew on good methods of teaching from her model lecturers in undergraduate education. Aside from her own classes, she attended others taught by native speakers and observed their efficient teaching methods. She commented that the native lecturers ‘arranged various kinds of teaching activities’ which helped the students’ learning. Some methods were applied later in her teaching practice and classroom.

**Panee**’s model lecturers of linguistics and phonetics impressed and inspired her to practise good pronunciation and further her postgraduate study in linguistics. When teaching, she urges her students to speak English with right and clear pronunciation.

### ***Theme 3: Impact of professional development activities on their practice.***

Issues involved in this aspect are as follows:

#### **Perceptions of professional development**

All the participants agreed that professional development was essential and vital at every stage of the teaching profession. **Wanee** stated that formal activities serve as ‘forums for teachers to share ideas and experience among themselves’. New approaches in teaching English can be disseminated and then tried. Informal activities should occur in the mid-stage of the teaching career since it fills the role of maintaining the lecturers’ professional competence from the age of 45 onwards when ‘the physical potentials decrease, but they still have to keep abreast with new teaching trends’.

The professional development of EFL lecturers has always been seen as having a close tie with overseas experiences. **Orn**, the business English program chair,

stated that confidence could be gained from interacting with native speakers and socio-cultural features of English-speaking people could be absorbed.

The two modes of professional development seemed to be equally essential in the teaching profession as the formal mode, as stated by **Orn**, ‘keeps the lecturers abreast with new trends in teaching while the informal keeps them active in their teaching career’. As for herself, after twenty-two years of teaching, she quickly became involved in improving herself, updating her skills and roles in order to be able to teach business English. She concluded that professional development serves as a means to maintain the lecturers’ competence, as well as making them feel competent and confident in applying new knowledge in their teaching.

**Panee** emphasised the significance of professional development as

It is the only way (for the lecturers) to achieve and maintain expertise. Trial and error in teaching is the development process because it basically puts the brain to work and makes the teachers learn.

She reiterated that trial and error in the process of teaching development ‘lead the lecturers to know that there are better ways of teaching’.

The five lecturers did not put a stronger focus on either of the two modes of professional development. However, **Piriya** emphatically mentioned that professional development should be ‘self-initiated and the commitment to professional development should be first in priority’ because teachers ‘should be ready to keep abreast with pedagogical trends’.

### **Factors motivating the lecturers to participate in professional development activities**

Many factors were revealed as motivating lecturers to engage in professional development. Firstly, **Panee** pointed out that the self-motivated quest for learning generates ‘the desire to further study or attend training courses in a

native-speaking country in order to use English in real situations and to practise teaching with native speakers'. She claimed that she was always 'enthusiastic to learn and to know more out of her curiosity and effort'.

Secondly, according to **Piriya**, being self-conscious about one's own competence can play a part in stimulating the lecturer to attend a training course. Upon graduation, despite being an outstanding graduate, she felt that she was not competent enough, especially in her communicative skills. She sought to improve it by working part-time in her tour agent company.

Thirdly, a sense of responsibility and high expectations for students are the main reasons to make a lecturer embrace professional development. **Orn** felt that she was fully responsible for the development of students' learning and competence. She felt an urgent need for professional development which would directly have an impact on the students' learning and their future careers. She thought that, in her case, it was not only a sense of responsibility, but also a sense of devotion as well as administrative duties that drove her to pursue professional development.

Fourthly, the lecturer's critical reflection for the purpose of evaluating previous teaching events had been regularly practised by **Panee**, who followed the Buddhist ideal of self-knowledge. Recalling what has worked and not worked in making the students learn raised awareness in her teaching action and knowledge about herself, and thus led to self-training and self-development.

It can be clearly seen that the desire for self-development is inherent in these lecturers. Each could recognise the need to perform better in their English proficiency, content and pedagogical knowledge.

### **Professional development activities impacting their practice**

All lecturers have had overseas experiences. Nada held two master's degrees, one from a Thai university and the other from the National University of

Singapore. She attended a pedagogical training course in Singapore, a sociological-cultural background course in the US, and presented a paper on career promotion for rural Thai women in Norway.

**Orn** held an M. Ed. in TEFL from a Thai university. At one point she joined a study tour to Australia. **Panee** spent a year as an exchange student in the US when studying in a teachers college. She held a master's degree in Linguistics from a Thai university. She also attended pedagogical courses in Singapore, New Zealand and England. **Wanee** was also an exchange student in the US when studying in a teachers college. She held a master's degree in TEFL from a Thai university and attended a pedagogical course in Singapore. **Piriya** gained a master's degree in Thailand, and attended training courses in Singapore and Australia. The period spent overseas ranges from one month to two years. They all agreed that their English competence as well as their socio-cultural awareness improved and, as a result, they were highly confident in their teaching.

In giving information about their professional development activities, the respondents were not specific about certain activities impacting on their practice. What could be clearly obtained from those activities were English language competence and confidence in teaching. **Wanee** commented that the teaching practice program at her teacher's college was intensive and, therefore, she could build enough confidence when teaching. She also mentioned that she was satisfied with the qualified teaching staff who devotedly developed the students' competence.

**Piriya** preferred independent reading assignments while being trained overseas. She learned a lot from this process. She then came to believe that independent learning contributed to successful learning. Likewise, **Nada** found that library research during her study abroad made her knowledgeable and competent in teaching and engaging in extra duties, such as working in the external relations division.

#### ***Theme 4: Beliefs, values and attitudes about teaching***

The lecturers' teaching beliefs, values and attitudes are presented in association with the following areas:

##### **Classroom management**

Most lecturers agreed that a non-threatening classroom atmosphere greatly contributes to students' learning. Meanwhile class discipline should neither be neglected or disrupt learning. **Piriya** stressed a positive attitude towards teaching as a primary step in expressing devotion to the students' learning. She emphasized a non-threatening learning atmosphere in class. **Nada** insisted that the teacher's love and devotion to the students should be clearly expressed and could be shown by being even-handed with the students. **Wanee** placed value upon the teachers' ability to build up trust, understanding and love between them and the students. **Panee**, when teaching, tried to master self-control. In doing so, she aimed to maintain her support for the students. Since she believes that understanding is the key to effective teaching and learning, she is often tolerant with students. She claimed that her practice on self-knowledge made her try to understand the students.

##### **Teaching plans, techniques and materials**

When planning a lesson, **Piriya** does not strictly 'stick to her own way'. She usually adjusts the approaches to the classroom context in order to make them appropriate for the students. Also, she thinks that teachers should focus on the students, try to find out what their problems are and help them as much as possible. In teaching English for communication, she tended to organise many kinds of activities to get students involved. She would feel that her teaching approaches were successful when students were able to communicate in English beyond the controlled or guided levels. Personalisation is an integral approach employed in communicative English classes in encouraging the students to contribute personal information when interacting with their partners.

In teaching, **Nada** does not follow only one course book , but would rather use materials from different sources as core and supplementary texts. Her teaching plan is flexible. Encouraging the students to be independent learners is her main teaching goal. Empowering learning is consistently attempted. To achieve these goals, she assigns students extra work outside classrooms. She employed a particular approach to connect with her students, in this case journal writing. It was ‘an effective method of drawing responses from learners’. Through this, she hoped she could learn about them, and respond to them. Moreover, she wanted to make them see that to study is to learn about the world and life.

**Wanee’s** teaching beliefs were different. She stated that ‘teaching comprises teaching methods, teaching concepts and philosophy, including personal psychology of teaching’. Teaching varies from one teacher to another, and could be forceful or complimentary. As for herself, she followed the objectives of the course rather than the course book. She took the first class as a trial for those that followed, adjusting and developing them to make them right for the students. Her class materials are compiled from different sources.

**Panee** usually assigned her students work on tasks outside the classroom to make them genuinely communicate in English. Special projects were often assigned in order to make them connect with the world outside. She revised class materials to keep them updated. **Panee** reflected on what had worked and failed in previous classes, and learned to make improvements in the following classes. She accepted that tacit knowledge played a vital role in her teaching. It made her realise that what she was teaching at that moment could not be conveyed to the students, allowing timely adjustment to occur. It is ‘an art, cannot be taught’. It is a kind of expertise, arising in the real context of teaching. Consciousness and concentration were also integral in teaching as they enabled teachers to adjust the course of lessons and complete them.

***Theme 5: Perceptions of the characteristics of expert teachers and teaching expertise***

The lecturers perceived that expert teachers whose expertise is recognized should possess the characteristics stated below.

**Wanee** suggested that the following behaviours should be perceived in EFL expert lecturers:

- They must possess this philosophy—the teacher’s duty is to help the learners to improve themselves. S/He should encourage them not to be afraid of learning.
- They should be supportive. They should see that learners do not want to fail, and want to be good learners, but they might not have gained adequate support. It is the duty of teachers to give them strong support in order to improve their learning.
- They are knowledgeable and skillful in what they teach.
- They should have efficient teaching methods and know how to convey their message.
- They should have a pleasant personality. This is accumulated over time, and related to their teaching methods. Some unpleasant personality traits should be modified in order to generate effective teaching.

As for expertise, **Panee** defined it as ‘inherent active teaching skills which have been learned for a long time until they become available and ready to be used’. She added that the expert English lecturers must be highly competent, native-like in their English proficiency, knowledgeable about the subject, skillful in teaching methodology, well versed in social matters, culture and the world. They must be particularly aware of the students and their sensitivity.

**Orn** explained that expertise means ‘efficiency in teaching which very much affects the students’ performance’. Lecturers with expertise are those who are



aware of students' language level and their language problems, are able to analyse the problems and know how to improve the students' language skills.

In conclusion, expertise occurs within routine duties and classroom practice. It is professional growth. It coincides with continual professional development.

### ***Theme 6: Other emergent issues***

Emergent issues of note were as follows:

- Facilitative environments at home influence the interest and preference of English.
- All lecturers have been enthusiastic learners of English since they were very young.
- Routine practice in the teaching profession is a valuable source of teaching development. **Orn** stated,

Routine practice is a type of professional development when a lecturer prepares lessons, tries new materials and approaches in class, helps the students learn, and analyses the students' needs in improving their English skills both in class and in their real life situations.

## **3.9 Discussion of the findings**

The discussion of the findings will focus on presenting the important concepts found, and how they contributed in reconceptualising the theoretical concepts of the main study.

The pilot study only focused on obtaining intended information via semi-structured interviews with five respondents. Its limitation lies in its lack of data from class observation. Although the findings were not multi-dimensional, the study revealed useful implications for the main study. It provided insight on the two key concepts of teachers' professional learning: professional development and expertise.

### **The concepts of professional development and expertise**

From the emergent key themes, expertise and professional development are two intertwined constituents in the teachers' learning process. Professional development is not a means to achieve expertise. Both professional development and expertise are processes in which teachers are involved to develop their professional learning. They occur concurrently. To develop expertise is to develop one's professional knowledge and competence. Both activities are an on-going process along the career path. This issue indicates that professional development is not a means to an end, that being expertise. Evaluating expertise requires a revised methodological paradigm of study, as well as a construction of criteria to assess it. Also, it is dubious in terms of when and how expertise can be achieved. Therefore, there is a need to reconsider the underlying concepts and scope of the main study.

### **The influences of teachers' biographical aspects**

Teachers' biographical aspects and personal dispositions have a strong influence on teacher learning and development as well as on their teaching in the classroom. The findings reveal interplay between life history aspects and the professional life of respondents. This professional life contributes to the lecturers' motivation and decision to participate in professional development activities.

Furthermore, the lecturers' distinctive personal characteristics and abilities, such as being enthusiastic learners or competent in English, play an important role in accelerating the improvement of the respondents' practice and professional development. It is evident that professional development is self-directed, and an act of personal commitment.

### **The influential role of the classroom as a source for professional learning**

The classroom is perceived as a platform for presenting the teachers' personal beliefs and theories of teaching. Teachers use 'methods, concepts, philosophy and personal psychology of teaching' in the classroom. They learn to adjust materials appropriately for the students. They learn to adapt their teaching strategies to fit students' learning. They assess their teaching from the students' responses. They attempt to approach the students in a humanistic way. This explains the significance of the classroom as a source for teachers' learning. Therefore, the influential role of the classroom as a source for teacher development should be an emphatic issue in forming research questions in the main study.

### **The powerful impact of formal professional development**

Interacting with native speakers and spending some time abroad is considered a must by every participant. English proficiency was the foremost element of professional competence. It provides them confidence in teaching, yet there is no implication on a direct correlation between a high level of English fluency and effective teaching. Taking **Nada** as an example, overseas experience meant more than a first hand experience of interacting with native speakers. It rendered her an image of being competent, and thereby drew recognition from colleagues. It gave her prestige, and strong confidence for teaching. She claimed to

have never thought that I was not qualified to teach. There are always ways for my teaching and my students' learning.

This confidence in teaching seemed obvious. Perhaps her competence in teaching refers to the ability to develop teaching strategies that fit her students, and thus generate their learning.

It is worth noting that all respondents were working in the international relations division of their Rajabhats. This is because, firstly, they had enough confidence

to take up the work and, secondly, they were competent, or recognised as highly proficient, in English by their superiors or colleagues and thus seen as able to effectively administer the work. This duty was assigned as a result of their being trained or educated overseas. To them, this extra work demanding English competence was believed to enhance their English knowledge and skills, and boost their confidence. They did not see these duties as an additional burden. Instead, they valued them as professional development activities. **Piriya** proclaimed, ‘Working (these extra duties) is learning.’

### **3.10 The pilot study and its impact on the main study**

The pilot study was conducted for four purposes: firstly, to get myself acquainted with field research, secondly to find out issues relevant to professional development, thirdly, to find out if the preliminary design, and the intended methods were appropriate, and fourthly, to search for prospective participants in the main study. The pilot study provided me with an experience of semi-structured interviewing, the names of prospective participants for the main study, and results that influenced modifications to the intended research plan. The findings concluded from the pilot study reveal the following issues:

1. the distinctive influence of the participants’ life histories on their professional development; and
2. the importance of understanding that the development of expertise is a continual process, and of a similar nature to professional development.

#### ***3.10.1 The distinctive influence of the participants’ life histories on their professional development***

I found that biographical aspects appeared as very influential issues in the respondents’ professional learning and development. The teachers’ personal lives are inseparable from their professional lives. Thus, their personal lives should be investigated. Furthermore, the significance of the impact of the teachers’ personal lives is also recognised by Day (1999), who claims that

professional learning is an experience affected by teachers' work and life experiences. Day also points out the importance of the self in professional learning, as it includes opportunities for reflection and self-awareness during practice. This implies a mode of life-long learning, not only through formal courses, but also opportunities for critical reflection on their practice, and in their regular work context. The findings concerning this aspect of the teachers' personal histories reflected a different and useful perspective to the design of the main study.

***3.10.2 The importance of understanding that the development of expertise is a continual process, and of a similar nature to professional development.***

The second issue drawn from the pilot study findings was expertise, which was found to be problematic. It was very difficult to judge if a teacher's performance can be considered as evidence of their expertise. For the respondents, English language proficiency had been the primary goal since they were young learners. Then, English proficiency was still cultivated in their English education, and in relation to teaching methodology. More recently, it had become an on-going process of cultivation during their teaching career. Therefore, expertise was developed along with professional development.

Expertise, as explained by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) is an action heavily guided by intuition, and a vision of possibilities. Literature on professional development mostly demonstrates the associated nature of the two issues. Eraut (1994) defines professional expertise as complex routine practice, comprising advanced knowledge and skills but performed rather unknowingly. This definition has a similar meaning to that given by Dreyfus. Researchers, such as Burton (2000) and Tynjala (1999), use related concepts, namely professionalism and professional identity, to show that they activate professional development. Professionalism, as stated by Burton, refers to the teachers' strong relationships with their perceptions of their roles. It is the spirit of 'striving after excellence', employing effort and persistence to do better.

Likewise, Tynjala points out that professional development is a process driven by professionalism, and professional expertise. It is perceived as a long and arduous process of continual learning from 'an individual's experiences and transactions with his/her environment' (360).

Bearing all these concepts in mind, I realised that expertise is demonstrated through performance, and is cultivated through a professional development process. However, to capture the development process, together with expertise, I would have to conduct ethnographic participant observation over a long period, which seemed improbable given my role as a full-time lecturer. Moreover, if the foci of the study were on both expertise and the professional development process it would be too complicated, and overwhelming. The scope of the study would be too wide, and thus adequate depth of knowledge would probably not be gained when these two complex issues were explored simultaneously.

Due to the previous reasons mentioned above, I modified the foci of the study and, consequently, altered the design and methodology of the study process. The aim of the main study was to inquire into all aspects concerning the teachers' professional development, namely their biographical dimensions, their professional and practical knowledge, the nature of their learning, their practice, and the institutional context.

To include all these dimensions in the foci of the study, I drew on work concerning professional knowledge, practical knowledge, reflective practice, and professional growth. McAlpine et al (1999) and Shulman (1987) view teachers' professional knowledge as a combination of content and pedagogical knowledge. Hoyle (1995) makes a point that teachers possess practical knowledge derived from personal domains. It is based on feelings, unknown or unperceived, and becomes part of the knowledge resource for teachers.

Apart from the previously stated premises, I also included two other issues in the scope of professional development. First is the trend of reflective practice,

which is seen as an effective means for the teacher to critically and consciously analyse their practice and see discrepancies between their expectations and actual teaching actions. This makes appropriate adjustments for teaching possible, and allows exploration of the teachers' practical knowledge which is 'tacit, spontaneous, and automatic' (Schon, 1983, 1987; Grimmet and MacKinnon, 1992). Consistent reflective practice is one of the core elements that facilitate the teachers to improve their teaching. Second is teacher cognition, involving the aspects of teacher thinking, beliefs, decision-making, awareness, attitudes, personal dispositions, and behaviour, which are all vital in teacher development. (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Woods, 1996; Gebhard and Operandy, 1999)

In conclusion, my study had been reshaped to depict how an individual teacher, through her/his life history and years of teaching, has learned and developed her/his practice, what constitutes her/his continual learning, and what enhances and hinders the integration of professional knowledge into her/his practice which directly relates to the students. The study encompasses the learning processes and activities of the three participating teachers over their years of teaching.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The pilot study was very useful for the main study. I gained suggestions on prospective participants for the main study. It yielded valuable findings that could be used as information to adjust the foci of the main study so that its directions were clear and comprehensible. I was able to experiment and become familiar with the research process, including carrying out fieldwork, using research methods such as building a rapport with respondents via semi-structured interviews, analysing data, and presenting findings. Furthermore the findings from the pilot study led to a shift of the foci of the main study.

In the next chapter, the methodology of the main study is presented. The discussion of the main study's methodology will cover research questions,

objectives, selected research approach, data collection methods, data analysis, fieldwork, and finally aspects confirming the reliability of the study.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE MAIN STUDY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an explanation of the methodology used in the investigation of the study. The explanation is divided into twelve sections as follows:

1. Research questions
2. The concepts underlying the research design
3. Objectives of the research
4. Methodology and the justification of its use
5. Data gathering techniques
6. Selection of the participants
7. Handling of the ethical issues
8. The fieldwork
9. Data analysis
10. Trustworthiness
11. Reflexivity

In Section 4.2, three research questions serving as the principal guidelines of the study are presented. In Section 4.3, the three underlying paradigms of the research design are in focus. With information on the nature of the knowledge investigated, the relationship between the knowledge and researcher, and the methods providing that knowledge, I was able to utilise these paradigms as the underlying concepts for my study.

Section 4.4 outlines the objectives of the research. Section 4.5 is the discussion on the methodology and the justification of its use. Various perspectives, and theoretical principles of qualitative approach, case study research, and ethnographic inquiry recommended by experts are considered and analysed in order to endorse the course of the study. The significant characteristics of these research approaches are presented in detail because of the realisation that I possessed a modest command of research knowledge and experience. Therefore, I consulted the experts' recommendations and took them as guiding principles during the preparation and fieldwork stages.

Section 4.6 describes the data gathering techniques employed in the study, including the reasons why these techniques were considered appropriate for data collection. The next section, 4.7, deals with how participants in the study were selected, as well as their qualifications in association with the study. The convention of handling the ethical issues in research, particularly in Thai academic circles, is described in section 4.8.

The fieldwork procedure is presented thoroughly in section 4.9. The procedure begins with preparation, establishing rapport with the participants, conducting interviews, classroom observations, and student group interviews, including simultaneous data analysis. Section 4.10 presents the on-going data analysis, from the preliminary stage until the emergent themes were conceptualised and, finally, a meaningful conclusion could be drawn.

In the section on trustworthiness (4.11), a description of how this was achieved in the study through the methods of triangulation and respondent validation. The last section (4.12) discusses reflexivity as a significant means of ensuring the robustness of the study.

## **4.2 Research questions**

Based on the modified foci of the study, I developed the following research questions:

1. How do EFL lecturers in Rajabhat institutes acquire and develop their professional knowledge and skills?
2. How do they integrate the acquired knowledge and skills into their practice?
3. What, if any, is the impact of professional development on their classroom practice?

These research questions served as guidelines for me to conduct an in-depth investigation over a long period of time in order to capture the complex professional experience of the participating teachers within the work context. It also allowed me to assess the impact of professional development on the students' learning.

### **4.3 The concepts underlying the research design**

The nature of my research study was carefully examined in order to find an appropriate means that provided some guidelines for a research design. I drew on Denzin and Lincoln's (1998: 201) view on the three 'inquiry paradigms', namely ontological, epistemological, and methodological. The ontological paradigm is concerned with the 'form and nature of reality': 'how things really are' and 'how things really work'. The epistemological paradigm includes the 'nature of the relationship between the knower, or would-be knower, and what can be known'. Finally, the methodological paradigm constitutes the 'how', the methods used by the inquirer to discover 'what can be known'. These three paradigms were employed as the groundwork for the research design, and research procedures, and are presented in the discussion below.

#### ***4.3.1 The ontological paradigm and the central issues***

The previously shown research questions include these central issues: the process of professional development, the process of integrating acquired and existing knowledge into practice, and the impact of professional development

on their practice. I perceived that the ontological nature of the knowledge to be inquired was the learning and development process and the knowledge integration process of the EFL teachers. These processes are continual, and encompass not only the teachers' practice, but also various dimensions of their life and work. They are interactively and socially constructed within the teachers' day-to-day settings, and are also inextricably connected to their personal lives. To investigate these processes, an 'intense and prolonged contact' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) with the teachers in their natural situations was required as it could lead to an understanding of how the teachers learned and developed their professional knowledge, and how they reacted to such learning and development. This reality could not be discovered through a process of reasoning and generalising, with no respect of time and context (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). It would not be possible to investigate such things through experimental design or survey approaches. I found that one feature of qualitative research fits the ontological paradigm at this point. It supports intensive involvement, and 'prolonged engagement'. This implies the use of longitudinal fieldwork, which gives rise to 'closeness' (Patton, 2002) to the participants and the situations, and provides opportunities to discover the subtle meaning of lived experiences and practice concerning the learning and development of the participants. This enables, to some extent, an 'inside' understanding (Schwandt, 2000) to be obtained of the teachers' perspectives.

#### ***4.3.2. The epistemological paradigm***

The epistemological paradigm of the inquiry emphasises the relationship between reality and the inquirer, the participating teachers and myself. This relationship is established as a bridge to understand the knowledge to be inquired--the lived experience, in its dynamic world. Bridging the researcher and the knowledge for the purpose of a deep understanding of the latter requires the cultivation of compassion, self-awareness, and critical ability. As recommended by Olesen (1998), in examining reality, the researcher's judgement, and thinking along the research process needs to be questioned in order to avoid imposing subjective viewpoints in her/his interpretation of

reality. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest one helpful practice: the researcher should attempt to gain the ‘holistic overview’ of the context, and the ‘local actors’. By holistic, they mean ‘systematic, encompassing, and integrated’. Such a holistic overview can be possibly gained through ‘a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding’, and of suspending or ‘bracketing preconceptions’ about the phenomena under study. ‘Bracketing’ refers to an acceptance of the conditions and nature of reality by reflexively acknowledging the researcher’s biases, prejudices, held beliefs, and commonsense (Miles and Huberman (1994: 6). This places significance on the ‘self’ as a human instrument in rendering trustworthiness of knowledge, or reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The relationship between the self and reality is a focal point of the epistemological paradigm of the inquiry.

#### ***4.3.3 The methodological paradigm***

The methodological paradigm constitutes the research design and strategies, as well as methods of gathering, and analysing data. In selecting a qualitative approach, I had no expectation of gaining knowledge about teacher learning from experiments, ‘verification of hypotheses’, or by counting and measuring methods, but I learned that knowledge is gained through an ‘emic’ approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 205). It is inductively derived from a process in which ‘local construction of meaning’ (Patton, 2002) has been involved by the teachers. This intrinsic meaning, expressed and constructed by those who possess knowledge, can also be obtained through the qualitative procedure, which will be presented in the section on the methodology used and the justification of its use.

### **4. 4 Objectives of the research**

Having based the research on these underlying concepts, and related a qualitative approach to the inquiry, I examined the relevance of the approach in relation to the research questions. Three objectives were brought into focus:

1. to conduct an in-depth investigation into the learning processes of the selected participants;
2. to analyse the crucial factors contributing to learning; and
3. to evaluate critically the relationship of professional development to classroom practice.

From the objectives, I attempt to identify the specific methodology employed in gathering and analysing the data.

## **4.5 The methodology used and justification of its use**

### ***4.5.1 Qualitative research***

Collis and Hussey (2003: 354) define qualitative research as a ‘subjective approach which includes examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities’. There is a clear emphasis on the subjective approach as leading to an understanding of the ways things are. Creswell (1998) describes a qualitative procedure as having these characteristics:

- prolonged field involvement in the natural setting;
- multiple methods of inquiry;
- interpretive understanding of reality, and emergent knowledge
- focussing on social phenomena, interactively and holistically perceived;
- awareness, critical reflection, and sensitivity as essential qualities of the researcher’s self

#### **Prolonged field involvement in the natural setting**

An in-depth knowledge of the subject or situation in a qualitative study necessitates extended time for the researcher to intensively take part in

fieldwork. The researcher needs to establish a good rapport with the respondents to build up trust, and thereby obtain authentic data, which is derived from the researcher's recognition of the respondents' rights, and their actual contexts. Studying the lived experience in a dynamic, ordinary, and natural world also requires active involvement, as well as thorough observations in order to learn about such experience, which has developed and continues to do so. As a result the researcher is able to make full sense of the experience studied.

### **Multiple methods of inquiry**

Since qualitative study aims to capture the multi-dimensions of reality, multiple methods are deployed for this purpose. 'Diversity' is described by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) when referring to this type of study as different methods used for gathering data. Various terms are included, namely life history, ethnography, fieldwork, case study, and participation/non-participation observation. These methods of investigation are believed to provide all encompassing data on the phenomenon under study.

### **Interpretative understanding of reality and emergent knowledge**

Knowledge from the study of human lives and experiences is 'tacit' (Polanyi, 1968). It is acquired from the deep engagement of the researcher with that knowledge. It is not acquired as a result of a hypothesis, or theory testing. On the contrary, it becomes accessible through a series of research stages. Creswell (1998) recommends that such knowledge can be revealed through refining research questions, and appropriate questioning. Wolcott (1994) suggests that the researcher should engage in these two activities: frequently examining the relationship between the researcher, participants and their environment, and continually examining what is learned and what should be further questioned. These suggestions served as guidelines for my fieldwork.

### **Awareness, critical reflection, and sensitivity as essential qualities of the researcher self**

Since the researcher is the tool of the inquiry, s/he has to sharpen her/his skills systematically and consistently. This involves an indication of the connection between the researcher self and her/his sensitivity to every aspect of the study. Creswell (1998) recommends that the researcher should state how the study takes shape, and should demonstrate a careful examination of her/his own thoughts, feelings, and reasons for behaving in a particular way in the research process. Acceptance of biases and values is a crucial element of the researcher to show honesty and their openness to research (Mertens, 2003).

A study on teachers' development is categorized in human studies. Stakes (2002:20) quotes Dilthey (1910) in his explanation of human studies as being 'founded on [the] relation between lived experience, expression and understanding'. The knowledge expected to be gained from human studies emerges from the 'attitude which is founded on the relation between life, expression and understanding'. This shows that much emphasis is placed on the personal perspectives of the researcher to experience and understand the lived experience under focus. To experience and understand, one requires 'empathy or re-creation in the mind'. One employs methods to grasp the lived experience, and Stakes (2002) insists that these methods can be found 'in ourselves, in our awareness, in knowing ourselves' (21). This shows the powerful role of the self in experiencing and understanding the phenomenon, and the close connection of the researcher self to the phenomenon, or lived experience.

### **Focusing on the social phenomenon, interactively and holistically perceived**

A qualitative study is a process of investigating a phenomenon-- moving and developing in its situation, or context. The phenomenon is embedded with knowledge which can be disclosed when an interaction between the researcher and that knowledge occurs. Meanwhile, the knowledge should also be deliberately perceived in a holistic rather than compartmentalised way, To



achieve knowledge from that phenomenon, it should be realised that the phenomenon is complex, and a deliberate and interactive way of studying it is essential.

#### ***4.5.2 Justification of the use of a qualitative approach***

The characteristics of a qualitative approach have been presented earlier, and in this section I present how those characteristics are advantageous for this study, and how they can be combined with the ethnographic tradition as groundwork for selecting data gathering techniques.

Firstly, the qualitative approach incorporates multiple methods of inquiry which can be used to capture the multi-dimensions of the on-going processes of the EFL teachers' learning and development. The ethnographic and case study methods were found suitable as reinforcing each other in investigating the teachers' lives and professional development. Moreover, the qualitative approach is 'adaptable to dealing with multiple realities' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 40), thus embracing their relationship with other colleagues, as well as their practice. Observations on teachers' behaviours in regular situations, such as the staff room, or classrooms can yield useful information on contextual factors.

Secondly, a qualitative approach focuses on prolonged engagement in natural settings (Woods, 1999), and is closely bound with time and place. In relation to time, teachers' learning takes place throughout almost all of their lives. Teachers who are enthusiastic in learning always find ways to learn beyond their childhood.

Thirdly, a qualitative approach supports the role of the participating teachers as 'knowers' who, in their learning process, select 'ways and means of acting and thinking that allow [them] to attain the goals' they have set and chosen (von Glaserfeld, 1991: 16). In qualitative examination, knowledge is constructed in the 'shared system of intelligibility'. It is a 'collective generation of meaning . .

. shaped by conventions of language and other social process' (Gergen, 1997:78).

In summary, I found that a qualitative approach can be used to capture these processes and grasp the interactions of the teachers within their context, on an individual level and as a whole. Through extensive engagement with the students, appropriate data can be attained.

#### ***4.5.3 Limitations of a qualitative approach***

A qualitative approach has some limitations to be recognised and guarded against. First, as a 'human instrument' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of data gathering, it is necessary for the researcher to avoid asserting their judgement on the data or respondents' values or beliefs as this will result in bias. One way of minimising bias that I adopted is to keep a reflective account of critical views on how some issues were developed, and what measures were used to counter the issues and any subjective views arising. Secondly, as a researcher, I had to learn to be critical and analytical in viewing the 'subtle realism' (Hammersley, 1992; Altheide and Johnson, 1994) of the participants' views and actions. Thirdly, I tried to 'represent faithfully and accurately the social worlds or phenomena studied' (Altheide and Johnson, 1994: 489). Preventive measures, such as reflexivity and respondent validation, were appropriately used throughout the research process.

#### ***4.5.4 A qualitative approach with multiple methods***

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, multiple methods of inquiry were selected. These methods consist of case study and ethnographic inquiry. The justification of the use of multiple methods is discussed below. The discussion begins with how case study inquiry is appropriately used, and finally how ethnographic inquiry fits a qualitative approach.

### **The case study inquiry**

The case study, as defined by Yin (1994: 13), is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used.

Accordingly, Creswell (1998) defines the case study as an ‘exploration of a bounded system or case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context’ (61). By ‘bounded system’, Creswell refers to ‘time and place’, or the context of the case, being located in a physical, social, historical, or economic setting. The case means ‘a programme, an event, an activity’ to be studied. By ‘multiple sources of information’, Creswell implies combined methods of collecting in-depth data. Merriam (1988: 23) suggests that the case study should be designed as an ‘intensive, holistic description and analysis of a social unit or phenomenon’, with an emphasis on the ‘concern with the cultural context’.

In this study, the case is teacher learning in the process of professional development. Teacher learning is continuous and complex, connected with the teachers’ personal lives, professional lives, professional practice, the and work context. It is a lived experience covering a long span of time from the past till present. Teacher learning involves 1) their dispositions and perspectives of learning, teaching, the work context, and wider social contexts; 2) their typical patterns of professional learning and development; 3) their construction of practical knowledge, including contributing influential factors; and 4) their integration of practical knowledge into the classroom with respect to their personal perspectives of teaching, learning, and students. To capture the continuum and complexity of teacher learning, the case study inquiry was employed.

Yin (1994) points out that a ‘descriptive case study’ can be effective since it includes multiple cases, or ‘a collective case study’ as referred to by Stake (2000). The important benefit of multiple cases is the ability to replicate the findings within the categories. This can strongly endorse evidence throughout the cases.

Following Yin’s (1994) and Stake’s (2000) recommendations, I recruited three EFL lecturers as sample cases aiming that their continuous and complex learning processes were to be used as evidence to clarify the main case of teacher learning. The sample cases were selected from multi-sites since data collected from different cultural or social contexts yield ‘heterogeneity’ and ‘maximal variations’ beneficial to a comparison of the cases (Schofield, 2002). This renders the inquiry deep and holistic. When working on the framework of the study, I perceived that the research questions apparently pointed out the conditions for these foci:

- actual contemporary events (Yin, 1994) concerning the professional development processes involved by the prospective teachers;
- the relationship of these processes with the teachers’ routine practice;
- the sequence of interactions between the teachers and the contexts over time, and
- the influence of personal aspects on their professional development.

These are phenomena that occur contemporarily, but are linked to previous events, and reflected in daily circumstances. They are complex, distinctive and unique due to the nature of each individual teacher. The study design seemed pertinent to Yin’s statement. The teachers’ learning is a phenomenon that cannot be separated from their contextual factors: their institutes, students, colleagues, and the community. In line with the notion that teachers’ learning is contextual, Flybjerg (2004) has made an interesting point that the case study is an appropriate approach for ‘context-dependent knowledge’, existing in ‘real-

life situations' ( 422) in which the embedded meaning is not interpreted only in contemporary events, but should be interpreted in connection to past events.

In designing a multiple case study, I aimed to gain compelling evidence from different cases, and thereby offer robustness to the study (Herriott and Firestone, 1983). The participating teachers share both similar and divergent features of professional learning, development and practice. The evidence from each teacher can be used to support the data analysis as a whole and the formation of inductive theories. I also welcomed Yin's (1994) theory of 'replication', similar results arising from different cases, in relation to similar emergent themes among the cases under study. However, the process of employing the findings of the first case to test the remaining cases was found to be irrelevant in this design. If contradictory patterns occur in the other cases, they should be taken as strong evidence to reflect the unpredictable features of the phenomenon under investigation. This can provide a full understanding of the cases in the cross-case analysis stage.

### **Ethnographic inquiry**

The ethnographic inquiry focuses on the 'understanding of social and cultural processes' in natural settings (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004: 535). The researcher has to spend a considerable amount of time in fieldwork in order to study the phenomena in its real context. Time is central in ethnographic inquiry. Wolcott (1995) points out that time is the 'critical attribute' of ethnographic fieldwork. Jeffrey and Troman (2004) emphasise that 'depth and complexity of social structures and relations' can be recognised through study over a long period of time.

Investigating the lives of individual teachers requires long involvement in being able to describe, analyse, and interpret the teachers' lives, behaviours, which encompass meaning concerning their professional development, and practice. Moreover, a lengthy period of involvement can allow the researcher to establish

a deeper acquaintance and relationship with the teachers in order to gain ‘thick description’. Therefore, this ethnographic characteristic can be applied within my study via observing and capturing the essence of development over time, within the context of the teachers’ lives and work. It can fit effectively into the methodological categories of data collection and analysis in the case study tradition.

Also, I discovered that the key features of ethnographic and case study approaches complemented one another in the design and procedures of data collection and analysis. My study investigates the lives of the selected EFL teachers as cases, employing qualitative methods based on ethnographical principles for data collection and analysis. The in-depth data of a case or cases can be obtained from multiple sources (Creswell, 1998).

Meanwhile, teachers’ learning, from formal or informal means, inside and outside the classroom and school, is heavily context dependent. Teachers’ learning is generated from interactions with contextual factors. Learning can be described as ‘how teachers make sense of their world and their work of teaching’ (Smyth, 1999: 67). There is always a sense of having to keep abreast with knowledge and teaching trends. This refers not only to being trained in specific aspects of knowledge and skills, or being educated for particular qualifications, but such a sense refers to the teachers’ development of their professional knowledge. The development involves a prolonged period of time, and consistent, as well as persistent, effort to devote their time and energy. Most importantly, development involves the teachers’ self-awareness of the need for change in their concepts and practice of teaching. It can be seen that teachers’ learning cannot be separated from their natural setting. The qualitative approach allows me, as inquirer, to understand, in the natural situations, the lived experiences, practices, and beliefs of the research participants.

#### **4.6 Data gathering techniques**

Selection of appropriate data gathering techniques is based on the design of the study and the research questions, and the latter serves as a good step to continue working on the techniques. Data gathering included these techniques:

1. the life history interview
2. the semi-structured interview
3. classroom observation
4. students' group interview

#### ***4.6.1 The life history interview***

The findings from the pilot study reflect the powerful impact of teachers' biographical dimensions on their professional lives, especially on their motivation to develop practice in their roles as effective EFL teachers. This necessitated the use of the life history approach, found appropriate for these reasons:

1. It places an emphasis on the teacher's self as having an overall impact on her/his professional life. It can capture the inextricable relation between their personal and professional aspects (Goodson, 2001).
2. It encourages the teachers' voice' in narrating their experiences in learning and teaching. These, despite being relative to others, such as students and institutions, tend to be personal (Barrow and Milburn, 1990).
3. It acknowledges the teachers' learning and development as a 'crucial interactive relationship' between their lives, perceptions and experiences, historical and social contexts and events of which they are an essential part (Goodson, 2001).
4. Teachers' learning and development is a complex phenomenon. A priori hypothesis concerning factors constituting this process or the relationship of these factors may be used, but to a limited extent (Oplatka, 2001). Other means such as surveying their views or questionnaires requesting information on their learning and

development may provide only superficial data. The teachers' retrospective points of view upon the span of their personal and professional lives allow the identification of the evolving aspects of their growth which impacts on their practice (Cooper and Heck, 1995; Josselson, 1995).

The striking appropriateness of the life history method is supported by Oplatka's (2001) view, drawn from Bruner (1986) and Marshall and Rossman (1989), that in the phenomenon under study, there is an interdependent relation of 'elements' that reciprocally shape one another. The life history method can be used to depict this reciprocal shaping of the teachers' personal lives and professional lives in relation to relevant constituents in the social contexts. This view agrees with the convention of the case study that examines the phenomenon in its real life context. The life history can fit in well with the case study and qualitative contexts, as well as facilitating naturalistic inquiry.

Despite being very beneficial to the study, the life history interview has its limitations which can arise from the data collection process. Being a 'human instrument' and using the life history method as a tool to probe into the participants' subjective world, these types of awareness must be raised.

1. A good rapport must be built to create trust between the researcher and the participants. This can arise when the participants perceive that their participation is on a voluntary basis, their rights are protected, and their information will be kept confidential.
2. The selection of the participants should be based on the attribute of enculturation and current involvement in the context under research (Spradley, 1979).
3. Interviewing via the life history method needs deliberative practice and the skills of being an effective listener. These interviewing skills can also draw information relating to subtler meanings from non-verbal expressions. The researcher should be an alert observer to, in Munro's words,



attend to how the story is told as well as what is said, that we need to attend to how the story is told as well as what is told or not told, and to attend to the tensions and contradictions rather than to succumb to the temptations to gloss over these in our desire for the story (Munro, 1998: 12-13).

4. The same general questions should be asked to each case in order to guide data collection, and thereby make a systematic comparison (Bennett and George, 1999).

The researcher must be aware that feelings of empathy towards the participants can be tolerated, but biases are detrimental to the quality of data. I also have to be careful within my status as researcher in relation to the living contexts under research, such as their colleagues and students. In other words, my empathy should not lead to side-taking, which can raise suspicions from the respondents or prevent them from generating data at a subtle level.

#### ***4.6.2 The semi-structured interview***

The semi-structured interview, being less restrictive, can allow the interviewer to probe and expand the respondents' answer, and in the same way, the respondents are also allowed to reveal more about the subtle meanings beyond the given questions. The interview schedule is not intense, and this leaves space for discussion and clarification between the researcher and the respondents (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). I employed semi-structured interviews as a linked strategy with the classroom observation technique. In other words, one semi-structured interview preceded the observation, and another one followed it. Such a plan was intended to gain, firstly, a preliminary understanding about the session to be taught and observed and, secondly, an insight into the teachers' actions, behaviours, and teaching process as shown in the classroom. In planning this type of interview, I did not expect to only gain data about the teaching process and classroom actions, I hoped to also obtain the teachers' perspectives on their practice and the connection between their practice and their professional learning.

The types of data gained, as well as the forms of data, are issues of concern. Semi-structured interviews could potentially produce data in narrative forms regarding the teachers' personal and professional life experience. The foci of my research are on learning and development, which is a continual process. They can be captured via the method that encourages the participants to narrate their knowledge construction and use processes. The subjectivity and sensitivity of the participants were expected to emerge through this method which must be conducted effectively to sensitise the perspectives and attitudes of the participants (Bird et al., 1996). Moreover, the data, which would be gathered by semi-structured interviews, could enhance and be triangulated with that gained from the life history, including ethnographical observation.

However, caution had to be used in conducting this type of interview. As suggested by Wengraf (2001), the semi-structured interview needs considerable preparation before it takes place. The researcher needs to be creative as interviewing must be improvisational to be able to perceive the 'inside knowledge of social life' (Bird et al., 1996: 85) of the teachers.

#### **4.6.3 Ethnographic classroom observations**

Ethnographic classroom observations were conducted purposefully to explore salient features and events or categories of behaviours relevant to the research questions, which explore the connection of the participants' professional development and their practice. Observing the classroom was expected to gain data concerning the teachers' instructional actions, perspectives, and feelings towards their actions and students. Observing these aspects critically would enable me to perceive them not at the surface level, but as deeper, specific, and interconnected with those obtained from other methods of collection.

Although the observation technique yields data that 'covers events in real time', and is contextual (Tellis, 1997), weaknesses can be found in it being time-

consuming, subjective on the researcher's part, and acting on the participants' part.

#### ***4.6.4 Students' group interview***

The findings of the pilot study reveal the connection between teacher development and students' learning. This connection dictates one of the goals of professional development: the students' learning outcome. Professional development and learning, despite being predominantly self-motivated and personally related, is usually aimed at better teaching for students, and results in better learning outcomes. The whole process of professional learning should encompass the teachers and their practice in relation to the students' learning. Data from the students can show if there is any impact of professional development on classroom practice, and the students' learning. The data can be used to triangulate with the other two sources, namely the life history and classroom observation methods. They can be used as 'rival theories' (Yin, 1989), different perspectives in analysing data holistically. Also, the 'voice' should be given to the students as a concomitant party in the learning process. Through their voices, the researcher can become sensitive to their needs and individual differences, as well as learning strategies and problems.

Finally, the group interview has an advantage of providing more aspects of data, especially group dynamics and interactions among the students. This allows me to gain insight in disclosing and identifying the perspectives, attitudes and behaviours of the participants. The uncovering of this type of data can add to the depth and breadth of the study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

In this study, the focus group interview was considered less effective because successful professional development should reach the majority, if not all, of the students in the classrooms, both of high and low performance. Selecting only high performance students or otherwise could create a bias to the study.

## **4.7 Selection of the participants**

### **Selection criteria and combined sampling strategies**

In selecting the cases, the number of respondents was less important than the aspect of being ‘enculturated’ (Spradley, 1979). For EFL lecturers, to be enculturated refers to those who have been involved in the process by which they learn about EFL teaching and, at the same time, they have also learned to assimilate that knowledge to improve their practice for a considerable amount of time. Following the concept, two broad criteria were set up preliminarily:

- experienced lecturers holding at least masters’ degrees in English studies, or teaching English,
- those who have demonstrated their continuous professional development during their career.

Based on these criteria, I used purposive sampling together with snowball sampling strategies, aiming for respondents within the stated criteria. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select the ‘information-rich cases’ ‘worthy of in-depth study’ (Patton, 2002). The technique of snowball or chain sampling was then used when initial respondents were requested to recommend colleagues who fit both criteria. The two sampling techniques were used in the pilot study in investigating the programme chairpersons in relation to their professional development. Within the same interviews, I requested each programme chair to recommend a colleague, or colleagues, who had extensive experience of teaching and professional development.

The implications of the criteria lend themselves well to purposive and snowball sampling strategies. The criteria and intended sampling strategies directed the programme chairs to nominate one or more colleagues who possessed the mentioned characteristics. From the respondents’ nominations, newly experienced lecturers were excluded. Senior, ‘expert’ and ‘exemplary’ lecturers were nominated instead. The nominees were those who had worked in the field

of English language teaching for twenty-five to thirty years. All were praised for their efforts in learning and improving their knowledge for teaching. All were recommended because they were devoted teachers. Recommended names were then validated by the recommendation of other colleagues from their own institutions. When agreeable views were obtained, I proceeded to the final criterion.

I proposed my request for participation in my research project to five nominated lecturers. Two of them declined because they planned to be involved in their own pursuit of personal development projects for academic promotion. Considering the feasibility of conducting the fieldwork with multiple methods, and with the travelling distances to be taken to different Rajabhats, I decided to recruit three participants. The final criterion, concerning the sites of the cases, was established. Since the study focussed on multi-cases from multi-sites, it was necessary to recruit participants from different Rajabhats. However the selected Rajabhats should be within a distance I could travel, with adequate time for me to socialise, interact and establish a close relationship with them while carrying on the fieldwork. I finally decided on three participants from three different Rajabhats. The first Rajabhat is located about forty-five minutes away by a bus journey. Travelling to the second Rajabhat from my residence takes one and a half hour. To go to the last one takes about two hours. The distance and time were manageable.

The three selected lecturers were qualified participants because they had adopted views and behaviours reflecting cultures of English teaching. Those being practice, learning and development for the profession, including important work contexts at Rajabhats. With expertise, and over-time experience, they should be able to discuss issues in these areas. They have their 'stories' to share, and these are meaningful because they are their 'lived experiences'.

#### **4.8 Handling of the ethical issues**

Personal contacts were made with the prospective participants to request their consent in participating in the study. My relationship with the participants varies from one person to another. The first used to be my colleague, another used to be my classmate, and the other was an acquaintance from the same profession. It was through verbal negotiation that I gained their consent. By doing this I followed a Thai academic culture of 'informed consent' in Thailand. A participant's consent to participate in a study is not considered as an official matter, but rather a personal one. When possible, I spoke with each of them. I informed them of the details of my research project; and for what purpose, how, and why I considered their participation to be desirable.

Also, I informed them that any information gathered about them during the study would be treated as confidential, and their anonymity protected. The participants' names would appear fictitiously in the research report. Confidentiality was reflected in not disclosing sensitive information and ensuring that any data used was not traceable. Then I asked if their consent would be granted.

The permission from each participant was granted without hesitation due to the fact that my study would be very useful in the area of professional development for EFL teachers in Rajabhat institutes, and that they would like to contribute in the study for Rajabhats. Then I clearly informed them that I would like to interview them about their personal and professional lives at least four times. I would interview them on their opinions of teaching and learning eight times, and would observe their teaching in four class sessions. Additionally, I asked for permission to interview the students in their classes at least twice. Through verbal negotiation I gained consent from them.

I made it clear to them that in observing their classes, I wanted to trace the impact of professional development on their teaching, not how effective their teaching was. The same reason was also given to them in the matter of

interviewing the students. In doing this, I tried to handle the ethical issue of being truthful to them, as well as eliminating suspicion that may have arisen due to my involvement with the students. I had to proceed with caution and sensitivity in this matter because in the Rajabhat culture, there was no convention of class observation among colleagues, or by superiors, for either the purpose of teaching development or appraisal for promotion.

The anonymity of their identities was imparted to the participants. Their names would appear fictitiously in the report of the study. Their data would be kept confidential. Advance contact before any data gathering activity was set as a conditions. Any contact at the first stage of the fieldwork would follow after their consent. Their withdrawal from the research process was acceptable.

#### **4. 9 The fieldwork**

Despite being trained in a short workshop on fieldwork in folklore and taking part in the first stage of participatory action research for community development while being a committee member of the Provincial Culture Centre, I could still be considered a novice researcher. Meanwhile, I had also conducted the pilot study, which took five months before the whole process was complete. However, this was not longitudinal fieldwork. Therefore, I set up the following activities to prepare myself before entering the field.

- Reviewing qualitative research literature on teacher development for the methods used and aspects probed, particularly biographical and practical aspects;
- Preparing the questions for the life history interview, and the semi-structured interviews in relation to the research questions;
- Preparing a tape recorder, cassette tapes, research notebooks for field notes, and a research log.
- Practising by interviewing one of my colleagues in order to get familiar with the life history interview, and to gain different perspectives on professional development and teaching.

- Developing the skills of being inquisitive, curious, reflective, and attentive.

After this stage of preparation, I had at least twenty questions to ask the participants concerning their life since childhood up to the current time. These questions were to be used in the life history interview.

#### ***4.9.1 The life history interview***

According to the plan, four life history interviews would be conducted on each participant, but in practice, two participants were interviewed six times. This was due to their tight schedules of work and teaching. The questions in the interview schedules covered the long span of their personal and professional lives. They were aimed to probe biographical factors that set up the groundwork for their preferences of English, their attitudes and characteristics towards learning English, the teaching profession, and particularly the natural habits or characteristics that stimulate them to do better in their practice - types of activities of professional development in which they were usually engaged.

Two life history interviews were conducted in the first phase, during the first semester. The first interviews were on general professional aspects: regular courses taught, pedagogical knowledge relevant to the content taught, and the types of professional development activities in which they had been involved. The themes that arose were concerned with three activities of professional development: structured training courses; self-directed learning and opportunistic learning; and learning from teaching experience.

In the second round, interviews were conducted after a one-month interval, and alternating with semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and student group interviews. The interviews covered

- education in their childhood,
- how the family environment influenced their schooling, and



- their decisions on entering the teaching profession and the factors influencing their decisions.

The gathered data showed the family influence on their education and career decisions. Biographical dimensions appeared obvious. However, the linkages between these biographical aspects and professional development were not yet distinctive at this stage, although the participants' responses were rather comprehensive.

The rest of the life history interviews were operated in the second phase. Three features gradually became apparent:

- the relationship between family influence, adolescent traits of enthusiastic learning of English, and professional lives,
- individual trends of professional development, and
- the impact of professional development on their perspectives and practices.

In interviewing via the life history method, I was fully aware that getting into the complex sphere inside the personal world of the participants was not easy, nor was capturing the meaning making process of their experiences. I avoided structured questions, but encouraged them to narrate certain topics and some events in their lives. I started with general topics, such as how they had developed their English proficiency, their professional development experiences, how they had come to be interested in English, and how they had taken up their teaching career. I avoided direct questioning because I would rather see them gradually disclose their personal selves. The questions, which had been prepared, were used as guidelines, but not asked in the chronological sequence. I let the participants 'talk' about their lives. I 'joined in' the talk, but tried not to lose sight of their non-verbal action, and emotional expression. I tried to avoid making the participants feel defensive, and resentful (James, 1997). I was also careful about preferred answers, and often I waited for the

conclusions of some events or perspectives to be illustrated the participants themselves.

#### ***4.9.2 Ethnographic classroom observations***

Classroom observations were conducted four times for each lecturer. During the first phase of data gathering, two classroom observations were conducted. The first took place at the beginning of the semester, and the second after the mid-term test. The purpose of conducting the observations in these intervals was because I expected to see different teaching processes, behaviours, interactions with students, and students' reactions as time passed. Perceived changes could be the topics to be investigated in the semi-structured interviews after the observations.

Before each class observation, contact was made with the participant one week in advance. On the day, I usually met the participants at least half an hour before the session in their office. Each session of class observation lasted two to three hours, depending on the course. During the first observation, I was introduced to the students, and given a chance to talk to them after the class.

In the classroom, I took a seat in a position where I would be least noticed. The usual position was on the side of the classroom where I could take a panoramic view of the teachers' actions, students' actions, student-teacher interactions, and student interactions. It was also the appropriate position for the capacity of my tape recorder.

I used an ethnographic approach within the observation. In each class session, I audio-recorded the teaching and learning activities. I also made written notes on the process of teaching activities as being conducted by the teacher, other visual aspects, the physical environment, seating arrangement, the number of students, the teacher's positions, movement, and facial expressions, as well as the students' reactions, and the interaction between the teacher and the students.

The classroom observation data in the first round illustrated the typical teaching processes and actions of the participants, including the students' reactions. Each participant employed different teaching methods, depending on the particular content they wanted the students to learn, and the skills they wanted the students to develop.

The other two observations of the second phase took place in the following semester. Changes I could perceive could be summarised as follows:

- Each participant had their own teaching strategies available in their repertoires. These strategies were already established. They would be selected, and utilised, appropriately within each course taught. Two participants who taught courses of a same nature to those in the previous semester tended to employ similar teaching processes, although some modifications could be perceived in the content and materials.
- The impact of professional development activities was reflected clearly. A direct transfer of teaching techniques learned from training courses was seen the application in most stages of the teaching process of one participant, whereas the construction of the content and teaching strategies adapted from self-directed means of development was clearly found in another participant. Meanwhile, no strong impact could be traced on the other participant's teaching.

Observation in the classroom provided the juxtaposition of teaching behaviours. Therefore, this illustrated current incidents in particular session requiring further investigation and questioning. The incidents juxtaposed were of three different types:

- The teacher was teaching with a relaxed manner, addressing the students' answers with praise and encouragement, while the students were listening to the teacher and talking to each other.
- The teacher was explaining almost every point in the hand-out. When asked, the students occasionally gave short answers, mostly 'yes'.

- The teacher instructed the students to work in small groups. She walked around to check if they knew what they were supposed to do, and later had the students present their work to the class.

These incidents raised the question of whether the behaviours were typical in the classroom, a point to be investigated in the follow-up interviews and students' group interviews.

#### ***4.9.3 Semi-structured interviews***

Semi-structured interviews were divided into two types: the pre-interview before each class observation, and the post or follow-up interview. They were conducted flexibly in terms of time. Some pre-interviews could not be conducted before classes which took place at 8.30 am, or when they immediately followed a previous class. I adjusted the manner of the interview by fitting in with the practical circumstances. When contacting the participants about observing their classes, they tended to inform me about what they were going to teach in the classes. I took this chance to record the information as interview data. Sometimes the conversation lasted about twenty minutes. When I saw them later, I reviewed the data with them in the follow-up interviews.

The manner of follow-up interviewing was also flexible in terms of time. When noticing fatigue from the participants, or when urgent activities came up, I would request their later availability.

The data from semi-structured interviews was useful in that it overlapped those from the life history interview and classroom observations. In this way, they began to reinforce, and sometimes contrast with, each other in manifesting the participants' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, their expectation and beliefs, and their judgments on their own development and practice, including the relation between their professional development and practice.

#### ***4.9.4 Student group interview***

Each student group interview consisted of six to seven students of mixed abilities, who volunteered to join in the interview. The main purpose of the student group interview was to acquire data concerning the students' perception of their teachers' teaching process, their learning strategies as the contribution they brought into classes, and their perspectives on their preferred teaching methods. This created an opportunity for the students to voice their role as an important part in teaching and learning activities. The students' perspectives could help illuminate the connection between professional development and the teachers' practice, and students' learning.

According to the previous plan, student group interviews would be conducted six times; three in the first phase, and three in the second phase. During the first phase of data gathering, I placed one interview during the second month of the semester, another one after the mid-term test and the last one before, or after, the final test. The first reason for placing the interviews at such intervals was to allow time for the students to experience the full range of the teacher's repertoire of teaching strategies. The second reason was to know how the students' learning strategies had been developed. In other words, what they used to facilitate their learning as they were taught via certain kinds of teaching strategies. The third reason was to investigate the students' preferred methods of teaching, and the reasons for their choice.

When conducting the group interview, I placed a strong emphasis on a small number of students, giving seven as a maximum. I made it clear to them that I needed information about their perceptions of the teaching strategies used by the teachers in class, not about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teaching. I was careful of managing turn taking during the discussion.

In the second phase, I reduced the number of interviews to two because I found that the first, conducted early in the semester, yielded very little information. It was too early for the students to perceive teaching strategies, and to apply many

learning strategies. Therefore, I collected data from the students twice; once after the mid-term test, and the other close to the final test.

The data from the student group interviews displayed these aspects:

- the students' confidence in the lecturers' knowledge and experience, including a professional ideal
- incongruity concerning teaching and learning from the lecturers' and the students' perspectives,
- similar learning strategies found among students from different sites,
- students' expectations of their teachers,
- students' motivation as causal to teaching processes
- an earnest demand for teachers to respond to students' attitudes and needs

The data addresses a significant meaning of professional development, as well as indicating a link between teacher professional development, learning in practice, and students' learning outcomes.

The fieldwork process depicting the two phases of data collection, including methods used, and key themes obtained is displayed in the following tables.

## THE FIELDWORK PROCESS

PHASE	Method	Outcome
ONE	<p><b>Life history interviews</b> (2-3 interviews with each participant)</p> <p><b>Semi-structured interviews</b> (3 participants, 2 interviews before class observations, and 2 as follow-ups)</p> <p><b>Classroom observations</b> (2 classes of each participant in the first semester)</p> <p><b>Student group interviews</b> (2-3 interviews with a group of 7-8 students from each observed class in the first semester)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development activities involved: structured training courses, self-directed learning, opportunistic learning, and learning from teaching experience</li> <li>Courses taught</li> <li>Pedagogical knowledge relevant to the content</li> <li>Lesson to be taught</li> <li>Planning and teaching, class activities</li> <li>Beliefs and attitude about teaching</li> <li>Professional learning activities concerning tour guiding</li> <li>Expectation of teaching and students</li> <li>Relation between knowledge and teaching</li> <li>Plans for contributions in Teaching tourism</li> <li>Beliefs about teaching</li> <li>Interactions with students</li> <li>Teaching intentions concerning the content</li> <li>Teaching styles</li> <li>Assessment practice</li> <li>Classroom environments</li> <li>Practical knowledge integrated in the classroom</li> <li>Impact of professional development knowledge</li> <li>Students' perceptions of teachers: their roles, qualifications, dispositions, knowledge and abilities</li> <li>Learning strategies</li> <li>Their motivations</li> </ul>

<b>PHASE TWO</b>	<b>Life history interviews</b>  (2-3 interviews with each participant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education in childhood, influence of family in education and career, childhood experience concerning learning, attributes and motivations in learning</li> <li>• More information on professional development activities, impact of professional development on perspectives and practices</li> <li>• Distinctive characteristics of exemplar teachers, sense of professionalism</li> <li>• Disputes and factions in the work environment</li> <li>• Stories about families, and support for professional development</li> <li>• Attitudes towards life</li> </ul>
	<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>  (3 participants: 2 interviews before class observations, and 2 as follow-ups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beliefs in learning from teaching experience</li> <li>• Awareness the difficulties in motivating students to learn, frustrations concerning the influence of the traditional way of teaching, and types of the students, awareness of ineffective student learning due to programme management, discouragement showing in low expectation of students</li> <li>• Occasional reflection, but not reflective practice</li> <li>• More information on impact of professional knowledge on the content knowledge, and teaching</li> <li>• In one participant, there is no direct transfer of knowledge from professional development into classrooms</li> </ul>
	<b>Classroom observations</b>  (2 classes of each participant in the following semester)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on the 'how' or the practical aspects</li> <li>• Different teaching processes in different classes</li> <li>• Encouragement for students to be independent learners</li> <li>• Changes in content and teaching processes</li> <li>• Authentic materials used in classrooms</li> <li>• High extent of English used in teaching</li> <li>• Slight modification of teaching</li> <li>• Teaching actions reflecting teaching beliefs, attitudes and intention on the subject content</li> <li>• Students' interactions with their peers and teachers</li> <li>• Teaching as transmission of knowledge</li> <li>• Task-based teaching</li> </ul>
	<b>Student group interviews</b>  (2-3 interviews with a group of 7-8 students from each observed class in the following semester)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frustration of learning due to difficult content, assignment and group work</li> <li>• Discrepancies between teachers' and students' expectations, and between the teachers' intention of the content and assessment, and the students' expectation</li> <li>• Strategies and attitudes of learning, intimidation arising from teaching</li> <li>• Demand for teachers to respond to their attitudes and needs</li> <li>• Students' views of the course as having no relevance to their future career</li> <li>• Appreciation of student-centred teaching style</li> </ul>



#### **4.10 Data analysis**

Data analysis is a process of organising and systematising the data in order that the central concepts, and thereby the theory, can be developed. It is a process in which the researcher is involved in making sense of the data, and then trying to exert her/his understanding of what has been learned from the field to the world. In the qualitative study, data analysis is an inductive process. Field data is managed through different stages until the grounded theory emerges (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays, 2000; Dey, 2004). When the theory is located, the central concepts are qualified, verified and confirmed repetitively until the final conclusion can be established.

Data analysis was carried out as an on-going process, concurrently with the fieldwork. It is useful in directing the researcher to adjust further data collection stages (Eisenhardt, 2002). Numerous expert methods and suggestions on the planning and manipulation of the analysis were taken on board during the data analysis of this study (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 1998; Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2000; Dey, 2004; Yin, 1994). However, the process of data analysis I adopted was a combination of expert recommendations and my practical judgement. I used the following plan:

1. Organising data and preliminary analysis
2. Categorising, and identifying themes
3. Explaining and examining other possible explanations
4. Developing the matrix display
5. Analysing within-case data, cross-case comparison and drawing conclusion
6. Exerting trustworthiness

##### ***4.10.1 Organising data and preliminary analysis***

The data collected in the fieldwork was from multiple sources: life-history interviews, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and student

group interviews, my personal journal entries, and other field notes, such as notes from telephone contacts with the participants. In organising the data, I transcribed it after each activity of collection was finished, and the transcriptions were filed separately into three separate folders according to the three cases. In each folder the transcriptions were filed into the types of data collection activities. Aside from these, an additional folder was used to store my personal journal entries, and other field notes.

The process of data analysis began immediately after the first interview was transcribed. The three main areas of investigation in the research questions were used as guidelines. They are:

- the participants' acquisition of professional knowledge and skills,
- their integration of the professional knowledge and skills into their practice, particularly their classrooms, and
- the impact of professional development on their classroom practice.

With an expectation that some data collected was not likely to fall into these three areas, I designated an additional area for 'serendipitous finding' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Preliminary analysis included reading and re-reading the transcriptions. This was to get myself accustomed to the data, as well as to be able to initially perceive emerging and possible themes. Later, relationships among these emerging themes were drawn. Preliminary analysis can reduce and make data become manageable (Miles and Huberman, 1994) for the following stages of analysis.

#### ***4.10.2 Identifying and categorising themes***

At this stage I paid careful attention to marked as well as unmarked themes. They were scrutinised with the judgement that they had equal qualities. This is to ensure that relevant themes were not overlooked. I applied the method of

transforming data suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). In this method themes were identified and categorised. On a sheet of paper, I put a main theme as heading, then related themes were categorised under this heading, followed by a short description, an example or evidence, and finally a reference. Relevant themes about the three cases were included.

Through this process, I was able to identify striking, as well as minor, themes. Constant comparisons of themes across cases were made to find similarities and differences of professional development patterns and contexts, including links of themes and patterns within and outside the categories.

#### ***4.10.3 Explaining and examining other possible explanations***

At this stage I was involved in placing judgements on recurring patterns, and inconsistent themes or patterns, to explain what emerged. Meanwhile, critical judgements should be made whilst looking for other possible explanations for the phenomena. Central concepts began to appear. Some concepts appeared common among the three cases, but the patterns formed were rather different depending on emergent themes related to the individual and different social contexts.

Preliminary explanations guided conceptions of the phenomena under study. Logical and causal relationships among these conceptions were determined to some extent. However, the grouping of the conceptions was applied because it was useful for further possible explanations. The grouping is shown below:

- Personal factors impacting development: factors promoting English competence—positive attitudes towards foreigners, enthusiasm to communicate in English with foreigners, being open to experiences outside, free time management for English learning enhancement
- Professional ideal: a sense of cultural heritage preservation, managing pleasant classes, encouraging independent learning

- Personal dispositions promoting professional development: being open and receptive, effective time management, a need for more knowledge of the content, a need of experience in the native-speaker country, enthusiastic to learn more.
- Professional development: factors enhancing development, motivation, professional development activities, effective professional development, aspects of knowledge gained from professional development, experience as a source of knowledge, roles and duties enhancing professional development, types of professional development enhancing knowledge, impact of professional development, ways and opportunities to acquire knowledge, the classroom as professional development, ineffective professional development.
- Beliefs about teaching, and personal beliefs: beliefs deriving from learning, and teaching experience, beliefs that shape practice, beliefs about content planning

Several working models from the conceptions were developed concurrently as an attempt to form a conceptual framework for the study. Since the knowledge from qualitative study is inductively derived through field data, and the analysis of that data, I identified the key concepts and searched for their relationships in a potential conceptual framework.

Although scholars on qualitative research discourage the formation of working models during data gathering, I found that it was useful. Firstly, developing models compelled me to think, explain, and evaluate issues arising throughout the process. I realised that this was how the knowledge under study occurred and how insights inductively emerged. Secondly, I agreed with Janesick (2003) that working models help the researcher see the direction of the next phase of data collection, and enable her/him to compare cases. Despite the fact that the model at this stage did not embrace all aspects of the cases under study, it illustrated the main constituents to be refined in the second phase of data collection, and in the final analysis.

#### ***4.10.4. Developing the matrix displays***

As the cases are the ‘units of analysis’ (Yin, 2003) of the study, it should be useful to develop a display of emergent conceptions. Thematic conceptual matrices recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) were found to be systematic, as well as flexible. The display for this type of matrix is developed using conceptual themes relevant to the research questions. Here themes were classified into two groups: conceptual themes, and clusters, referring to ‘summary phrases’ related to conceptual themes. Developing the matrices started with revising the category worksheets with reference to the original data to ensure that important themes were not left out. Then, the conceptual theme was labelled. The clusters entered the first cell, and the quotations of the three participants filled the three cells as supporting evidence.

The matrix is inclusive and illustrative of the significant and relevant conceptual themes. In this way it lends itself very well to make cross-case analyses, which are essential for the researcher to decide if the entries in the cells provide an adequate coverage of the case (Yin, 1994) thus resulting in a quality conclusion.

#### ***4.10.5 Analysing within-case data, cross-case comparison and drawing conclusion***

From the matrices, I screened the themes of each case, and observed unique patterns that emerged. Consequently, themes and patterns were analysed within the case to see internal relations and contradictions. Then, these themes and patterns from each case were fed into the process of cross-case comparison.

Eisenhardt (2002) suggests that cross-case comparison is a preventive measure for the researcher to avoid leaping to conclusions. In cross-case comparisons, the researcher should look at the data in many divergent ways. I looked at the categories of one case, compared and contrasted them with those of the other two cases to identify similarities and differences. Categories in comparison

were referred to the research questions in order to seek relevance. I noted down questionable points, and occasionally verified them with the raw data. I accepted the pattern-matching method as well as the rival patterns. I looked at the uniqueness in each participant's professional development, with respect to her/his personal history and the impact of the context. Grouping patterns was based on these classifications:

1. general patterns occurring across the categories and cases,
2. specific, opposite or contradictory among the categories or cases, and
3. specific similar patterns which match in one category or case, and across the other two cases.

As a result, these concepts emerged:

- each lecturer has a unique process of professional development. within the process, there is a distinct pattern of learning and development. The self and the context are the most influential elements in professional development.
- Interconnectedness and the professional ideal have proven to be the goal for involvement in professional development
- Effective professional development processes should address the students' learning outcome.

#### **4.11 Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, unlike quantitative, judgement on trustworthiness is based on different criteria. Terms such as validity, reliability, and objectivity are replaced by analogous terms: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 219). Being a 'human instrument', and a lone researcher, I assured the trustworthiness of the study by

- Designing the research, using case study strategies with multiple cases and multi-sites;
- Implementing multiple qualitative methods in gathering data for the purpose of triangulating the data to achieve credibility;
- Having a clear, complete, and detailed description of the study (Brown and Rodgers, 2001), a ‘thick description’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), achieved by a) a thorough and systematic process of gathering data; b) being a critical and creative observer and writer in keeping a reflective journal along the process of data gathering and data analysis; and c) establishing ‘openness’ by describing the choices made, activities done, and why and how each step of the study was carried out (Chenail, 1995).
- Ensuring the credibility and dependability of the data gathered by using triangulation and respondent validation. The two methods and how they were applied are explained in the following section.

#### ***4.11.1 Triangulation***

Triangulation is an ‘attempt to understand some aspect of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint’ (Brown and Rodgers, 2001). It can increase the reliability of the data and the process of gathering it when the data gathered from different sources mutually supports and provides evidence. Triangulation played an important role in the design of the case study, and as a means of building up trustworthiness of the data.

In this study, triangulation was possible in two aspects. Firstly, the design of the study as multiple cases from multiple sites lends itself very well to triangulation. Three cases provide information which is very distinct from one another. Different sites yield different contextual information constituting professional development. Second, ‘methodological triangulation’ (Denzin, 1978), referring to a means to collect data from multi-methods, is employed. Three different methods, namely life history interviews, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews, were used to collect data from the

three participants. The data gained covered the aspects of their personal lives, their teaching perspectives and behaviours as seen in the classrooms, and their stories of professional development. The data from these three methods complements each other. Furthermore, the student group interviews were used to gain data from the students' perspectives to shed light on other aspects not revealed from the teachers. By employing multiple methods, subjective knowledge from the teachers can corroborate and contradict subjective knowledge from the students. Multiple sources of data, when being juxtaposed, bring about complementariness and inconsistencies, which can be illuminative, and thereby can strengthen credibility of the findings (Patton, 2002).

#### ***4.11.2 Respondent validation***

Credibility and dependability, as well as the confirmability, of the study can also be assured by a method called respondent validation, or 'member check' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In the study respondent validation was practised as a routine in the data gathering process. When the initial interview was transcribed, the report was then read to the participant in the next meeting before starting the interview. Regularly, I requested the participants listen to the report of the last interview for twenty minutes to half an hour. Pauses were made at intervals in order for me to observe the participants' reactions, such as confirming some issues, clarifying some points and adding more information. Often I asked them to clarify some questionable points that I intended for them to explain. The reason that the written transcript was not presented to them is that they hardly had time to read the transcripts since they carried heavy teaching hours and extra administrative duties. They agreed that it was better for me to read them that which I had recorded and discuss it together in the following interviews. On-going respondent validation can generate richer and subtler data, amidst time constraints on the participants' side.

Respondent validation was carried out once more after the first draft of the findings was complete. I made visits to the participants, and presented the findings to them in the form of case records. They read the records thoroughly.



In one case record, some minor corrections were made. The key issues of the findings were not to be changed. In the other two records, information on personal views about their education, and their childhood lives, as well as some incidents they were proud of in their professional lives, was added. Also, one participant clarified the meaning of the metaphor he had previously used. This made me reconsider the meaning I had attributed to that metaphor, or if I had used some of my own value judgements to interpret his meaning.

Respondent validation creates opportunities for me to maximise proximity of understanding with the participants. In this setting, proximity is derived from their awareness of my sincerity in intending to reconstruct their truthful accounts, and in rendering authority to them in generating their own stories. Respondent validation not only confirms the truthfulness of the findings, but within close proximity, it can strengthen the relationship and enhance trust between the researcher and the participants. During the process we realised that we assist each other in bringing out trustworthy information. We learned to critically evaluate our perceptions, and the judgements of truth we co-constructed.

## **4.12 Reflexivity**

### ***4.12.1 The significance of reflexivity***

Being reflexive is at the heart of a qualitative approach, in which the researcher is 'a human instrument'. Reflexivity is a deliberative, reflective, sensitive and critical way to look at the studied phenomena in close relation with the 'research self'. It is referred to by Ball (1990) as a conscious effort of the researcher to maintain the research self, which

requires careful planning and sensitive and reflective an interaction between the researcher, and involvement with actors in the field. It requires a studied presentation of self (or selves) and the adaptation of the research self to the requirements of the field. The research role must be constructed responsively and appropriately in relation to the setting under study (Ball, 1990:158).

Blumer (1969) explains that reflexivity is the interaction between the researcher and the studied phenomena in the field situations. It manifests itself in the researcher's interpretation of the field situations, and how the researcher decides and selects appropriate strategies to collect and analyse data during the research process. Self-questioning and self-understanding becomes crucial in an 'on-going examination of *what I know* and *how I know it*' (Schwandt, 1997: xvi). Davies (1999) suggests a simple, but important explanation of reflexivity is that it 'expresses researchers' awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it' (7). The awareness of the connection genuinely affects the methods used in the research process.

#### ***4.12.2 The reflexive account on data gathering and analysis***

##### **Preparation for the fieldwork**

Carrying out a qualitative inquiry is a challenging journey with unseen problems which must be managed in order to see existing phenomena. It is also a learning-by-doing process, in which frustrations, dilemmas, and joy in the act of inquiring contribute to enable me to gain insights, as well as maintain self-knowledge.

Prior to the fieldwork, I prepared myself for the role of researcher by conducting a long interview with one of my colleagues in order to 'sharpen the instrument' (Brown, 1996: 42). This gave me a chance to cultivate some dispositions with the potential of utilising them in the field. I practised to become inquisitive, curious, attentive and reflective because I realised that these are dispositions essential for gathering quality data. I found that my weakness lies in being inadequately inquisitive, in fear that I would intrude into the respondent's description of the aspects of his/her world, which s/he was reluctant to disclose. I also learned that reflectivity maintains the balance of being proactive and restrained, and the dominance of sensitivity over

preoccupying interpretation. I often reminded myself that the researcher's stance manifested itself through reflexivity throughout the research process.

### *Taking the role of sensitive and critical researcher*

To connect the researcher's stance with the world I engaged, I kept a critical reflective journal, recording every stage in the entire research process and my researcher role. Before entering the field, I recorded in my journal how I approached the prospective respondents through telephone communication and personal contacts, why I considered them qualified participants, what type of cooperation I requested from them, and how ethical codes were practised. I made one request for a male participant to inform his wife, who is also a lecturer in the same institute, of my frequent visits to him, and the purposes of those visits. The first visit was to negotiate an agreement, and receive their consent. I accidentally obtained information on professional development from the first participant, which I was unprepared for. He was very willing and seemed to be open to give information and talk about himself.

There were three participants in my study. I was able to realise from the first encounter that each participant was unique in his/her personal dispositions, personal lives, professional lives and professional development processes. The experience from the first encounter, together with the current situations the participants were in, helped me decide to adjust the data gathering techniques, and re-sequence data gathering activities. The fact that classroom observation was not a norm among EFL lecturers in Rajabhat was one factor for flexibility. I had to comply with their consent. I observed the classrooms in which they felt comfortable teaching in my presence. Moreover, the information about the participants' current situations was another factor. One participant chaired the Programme of Foreign Languages, another was Deputy Director of the Language Centre, and the other taught both daytime, weekend and night classes, for approximately 23 hours a week. They were unavailable for pre-class observation interviews. Recognising these situations, I combined the pre-and post class observation interviews as follow-up interviews. Thus, I learned to be

flexible in the field, and adjusted to any opportunities that may yield knowledge. As a consequence of the adjustment, things turned out better than I had expected. The ‘talks’ after classes covered more time, were rather loosely structured, and more relaxed at lunchtime. I found that the talks revealed overlapping dimensions of teaching, students, enriched personal experiences and dilemmas.

The number of the life history interviews was maintained as planned, with extra time requested when appointments were cancelled. I took the times of interviews as one criterion. If the times of the interviews were equal among the participants, then aspects of the data were considered to see what had not been collected, and why. Another criterion was the emerging themes from preliminary data analysis. Apparent complementary and different patterns across the three cases enabled me to collect additional data.

### *Journal recording*

I made it a rule that my journal entry should be written on every visit of the field work, along with data analysis and while reading research literature. For every visit, after an appointment was granted, I prepared questions to ask, looked back at the transcribed notes, and recollected the images of the previous meetings or classroom settings to find ‘different meanings’. On the day of the visit, I usually arrived at least half an hour before the time of appointment. I observed, and took notes on the physical environment, the atmosphere, and the students’ actions in the cafeteria and in the classroom. This provided important information about the context. I also observed and noted down the atmosphere and interactions among colleagues of the participants, chunks of their conversations, the interactions between the participants and the students and the participants’ behaviours towards myself. All these observed aspects illustrate the institute’s culture. After the visit, within the same day or the next day, I wrote down my thoughts and comments arising from my observation, from my ‘internal conversations’ (Blumer, 1969) with myself. The records cover these dimensions:

- verbal and non-verbal reactions of the participants,
- questionable points, such as some suspicions arising from the events observed,
- my own sensitivity towards the participants and their behaviours,
- my frustration related to some aspects of the participations' behaviour,
- my empathy, and bias which could be spelled out,
- how and why changes in the content of the course, and teaching processes were made, and
- some insights from my own reflection.

These aspects engaged me to ponder and find meaning in the consequent data gathering activities. My emotional aspects, when spelled out, brought about the recognition that detachment was needed in the field events. My personal judgements on the participants' behaviours should be avoided, but understanding of the meaning in such behaviours should be the aim instead.

I realised that I had to be consistently self-aware. It was my guide in taking the role of researcher. Establishing a close relationship with the participants was not difficult, but as a researcher, I tried to keep some distance, to prevent myself, and my preoccupied thoughts, as being one of them. They 'lived' in a different context, and 'lived' different lives. With self-restraint, I stepped back, and tried to understand the participants, and their behaviours, as socially embedded in their culture and contexts. They had their own local contexts, including a local practical language. In doing so, I could avoid taking things for granted, but I made an effort to communicate with them and understand them. Reflexivity is crucial in the data collection and analysis process. As the involvement in the field and data analysis proceeded, I gradually discovered that the participants' behaviours are intertwined with their beliefs, and shaped by their personal backgrounds and their work contexts. If I did not practise self-awareness and self-restraint, the interrelatedness would be hidden in my hastily imposed judgement.

Self-awareness played an important role once more in collecting data. While questioning myself of *what I know* and *how I know it*, I modified the technique of respondent validation. This was because I found that the first transcribed interview, handed to the first participant a week earlier, was never read. Therefore, in a following interview, prior to the 'talk', I asked for some time to briefly review with the participant the information obtained during the previous interview, and asked for the clarification of some questionable points. Via this process, I could ask them to validate their own information, face to face. I also found that the participants preferred this way to having to validate their information by reading the transcribed versions. Acknowledging and sympathising with the participants' preferable ways of giving information was, I believe, one effective way to generate data as a 'social construct' (Ball, 1990).

The venues of the interviews played an important role in the data gathering process. This varied from one participant to another. I found that interviewing one participant in the staff room yielded a rigid and matter-of-fact type of data. Therefore, later I found that by having lunch with her after the classroom observation, I could collect multi-dimensional data, namely professional experiences, personal histories, and beliefs, including emotive and confiding matters. Moreover, when her colleagues joined in, some issues of conflict among them, frustrations, and institutional politics were discussed. The information flowed in a lively manner. Unfortunately, it could not be audio recorded. When all of them left to teach, I wrote the information down before it was lost.

Some participants were very open in giving information. Again, I had to be aware of underlying subtleties. I realised that personal context was not completely disclosed by the participants. There were more relevant aspects to be probed. I found that some participants were reserved during the first interviews. I found that the more discussions we had concerning teaching, the more I listened to them about their experiences and dilemmas, the more subtle data, not only on teaching, was disclosed.

I agree with Ball (1990) that sensitivity and deliberation is a key factor in the data gathering process. Being mindful of what participants were conscious about should always be at the forefront of the process. At one point, the students mistakenly submitted questionnaires to one participant instead of to me. In one questionnaire, one student included a comment that he should bring a sense of humour to his teaching. He was upset and responded to the comment that he was not a comedian. Fortunately, I had shown the participants the questionnaire before distributing to the students, and there was no item concerning the evaluation of the teacher's performance. The student added that comment on his own, and his comment did not affect the relationship between that participant and myself. I learned that I should have been more careful in collecting all questionnaires on that day. From that time on, I informed him when I was to meet the students for interviews, and asked about his opinions on the suitability in terms of time, and his opinions and expectations about his students. I also made it my role to inform the participants every time I interviewed their students. This was to create trust between the participants and myself.

The issue of teaching performance was sensitive, and I was very careful not to address this issue in any questions with the participants and students. I made it clear to both parties from the beginning that I had no intention of investigating teaching effectiveness. To some extent, I realised that the students had trust in me because I was a doctoral student, not one of their teachers. Also, I understood that the students were willing to express their opinions and attitudes about their learning because such chances of talking openly were rare.

Empathy is one type of emotion that had to be managed fairly. I listened to their problems, agreed with ways they used to solve those problems, and admired their capabilities in managing to cope with those problems. I never gave them suggestions on how to solve problems. To do this is to unnecessarily intervene in the participants' personal affairs. Such intervention could affect the quality of data since it could block their explanation, and thus my understanding, of their underlying reasons or motives in tackling the problems.

At the data analysis stage, reflexivity can be shown in my interaction with the data, such as the themes emerging in the preliminary analysis of the field notes in early stages. As in the data collection, I self-reflectively recorded the issues I had doubted, and wanted to pursue later. I researched further literature in data analysis to obtain suggestions for an appropriate method. Within the journal, I kept a record of the data management process of each day to have a clear track to follow. Knowledge input from research literature such as ideas and information from literature on qualitative data analysis was included and used as a valuable resource. Later, I made a summary of the findings which gradually emerged and developed. A plan for the next steps concerning data analysis and collection was written down to give me a clear direction. Further recording focussed on the interpretation process, including details of how meaning was concluded, and finally how concepts and theories from the analysis evolved. By interacting sensitively, and critically with data while analysing it, I was able to look for alternative interpretations (Yin, 1994) and juxtapose them with those already held. Reading literature in data analysis (Huberman and Miles, 2002; Eisenhardt, 2002) and adopting some careful approaches, I moved beyond impressions through diverse angles. As a result, a reliable generalisation from the analysis was drawn.

By keeping a reflexive journal, I trained myself to think rigorously about various aspects involved in collecting and analysing data. Being critical of my actions, made me rethink and retry to see appropriate ways and reach sound interpretations. Reflexivity presented in the critical reflective journal alongside field notes could generate rigour in the study (Burgess, 1993).

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

This chapter is concerned with the whole process of conducting the study, from research questions, design, choices of data gathering methods and the data gathering process, to data analysis. It presents each step of the methodology used in the holistic and in-depth investigation of the cases under study. It



describes the protocols of qualitative methods and case studies, as well as the alternatives selected to suit the contexts of the study, including the justification for employing them. It also addresses trustworthiness as a vigorous constituent of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the key themes of the findings, gleaned from the three participants involved in the main study and including their professional lives in connection with their professional development journeys and their professional practice. It is shown in the findings that the account of each participant's continual professional development process, perspectives and practice is different from the others. This is due to their individuality and different contextual factors. Related to the themes concerning the participants' professional development and practice, themes emerging from the students' perspectives are also included as they are related to the integration of the participants' professional knowledge into their classroom practice.

Prior to the presentation of the key themes, the profiles of the three participating lecturers are introduced in section 5.2. In this section each lecturer's background information will be examined as an introduction to her/his personal and professional life as covered in the study.

Section 5.3 includes the illustration of the key themes, stated in sequence. Under each theme, relevant accounts of each participant are interwoven as evidence to support the themes. Emergent from the data analyses, these themes are considered significant:

1. personal histories reflecting a strong impact on learning, career choice, and professional development;
2. professional lives;
3. professional development;
4. impact of professional development;

5. teachers' beliefs;
6. classroom practice, including the teachers' perspectives on students, and students' perspectives on the teachers and their practice, and the students' learning strategies;
7. the work environment

Section 5.4 is the conclusion of the findings. Key points of the chapter are summarised and this section will lead to the next chapter on the discussion of the findings, in which the key themes will be interpreted, conceptualised and explained.

## **5.2 The three participating EFL lecturers**

All of the lecturers are recognised as leading professionals in the field of teaching English in Rajabhat universities. They are very proficient in English usage and communication. They hold masters degrees in English and English language teaching. They have proven to be very capable of managing knowledge and resources from accumulative formal study and training experience for their own professional growth and for the improvement of their scholastic abilities. They have been involved in self-motivated continual professional development to a great extent. They appear to persevere in developing themselves professionally, and their development is unique.

Apart from the distinguished accounts of professional development, these teachers possess intrinsic, remarkable attributes supportive for their striving to do better. They are enthusiastic for learning. They are well organised and hard-working in the processes which attain their achievement. Their personal lives are interesting, and are mingled with their professional lives. They are professionals who attempt to establish a link with various contextual factors in the process of making sense of those factors and successfully coping with them.

In this study, the three lecturers are referred to by pseudonyms. They are **Nanta**, **Passorn**, and **Silk**. The lecturers work at different Rajabhat universities, but they are all English teachers.

### **5.2.1 Nanta**

**Nanta** was in her early fifties when the study started. She is married with two children. She has been teaching for almost thirty years. Due to her husband's judiciary work, which tends to involve frequent relocations to take new positions in different regions of the country, **Nanta** has to transfer to different Rajabhats to be in the same region as her husband. She spent one to four years in each Rajabhat, performing regular teaching duties, as well as managerial work. This relocation process would appear to have come to an end following her husband's recent permanent appointment to the central office. The Rajabhat in which **Nanta** currently works is located in a suburban area of Bangkok. It is a reputable Rajabhat with strong academic disciplines in social sciences and the humanities.

**Nanta** received a bachelor degree in English from a prestigious university in Bangkok. She entered a teaching career as a lecturer in the English department in a teachers college in the northeast of Thailand. One year later, she furthered her study for a master's degree in comparative literature in the same university. From the northeast, she transferred to the north, and there she attained her first academic title as an assistant professor. When she transferred to a teachers college in the central area, she attained a scholarship to earn another master's degree in the UK, focussing on the pedagogy of teaching English and material development.

She transferred back to the northeast, but in a different teacher college, then to a Rajabhat (a former teachers college) in the south. She obtained a fellowship to attend a seminar on American culture in the USA. Amongst these transfers and duties in different locations, she collected materials and began conducting study

as preparation for the attainment of an associate professorship. She achieved this during her last transfer to her present Rajabhat, and she also gained a further fellowship to the USA.

**Nanta** primarily teaches reading and literature courses. Besides teaching, she also chaired the foreign languages programme, a responsibility that she felt was her duty. She did not perform other extra duties, such as teaching weekend classes. She is now working towards her most challenging aim within her professional life – that being the attainment of a professorship, which is difficult for EFL lecturers to achieve.

**Nanta** has been recognised as a leading professional in teaching English. Her education and professional development was acquired both in Thailand and overseas. She has had an extensive experience of formal professional development. Whenever she was aware of a desire to fulfill the role of being a competent English teacher, she turned to a course in a native-speaker country, with an expectation that her English proficiency, as well as her pedagogical knowledge and skills can be improved. **Nanta's** professional development pattern reveals a coexistence of formal and informal professional development. The formal development nurtures her informal learning in her practice and the path of career advancement.

**Nanta** has proven very capable of managing knowledge and resources from overseas experience for the support of her professional growth. Accumulative formal study and training experience has enriched her scholastic abilities, and thus has enabled her to pursue professional advancement. She has become a recognized academic in the field of teaching English as a foreign language because of her persistently self-directed professional development. Traces of changes in her practice due to the impact of her formal and informal learning can be found, and the pattern of her learning, especially the distinctive coexistence of both types of learning is very interesting.

Apart from her self-motivated, and continual professional development, **Nanta's** personal dispositions, and her personal life facilitate and activate her

professional life, particularly her academic status in the Rajabhat circle. She is well-planned, well-structured and has concentrated very much on her operation to reach her intended professional goal. Furthermore, her life reveals a clear influence of her parents' upbringing, including her present family on her professional development. Her personal and professional life is a phenomenon worth studying.

### **5.2.2 *Passorn***

**Passorn** is in her early fifties. She is married with three children. She has been teaching for thirty years. Currently she is a lecturer at a Rajabhat located in a province next to Bangkok. She received her bachelor's degree in foreign language teaching (English and French) from a university in Bangkok. She entered the teaching profession as a secondary school teacher of French in a school located in a province near Bangkok. Afterwards, she transferred to another school in a different province, although still close to Bangkok. Some years later, she furthered her study in teaching English to a master's degree level.

After her study, she returned to work in the same school. Besides teaching, she performed managerial duties, such as training secondary level teachers of English in her region and being a deputy director for guidance and counselling. Other work she felt obliged to perform was assisting the director with his study for promotion. However, her efforts were rewarded when she requested permission to transfer to work in a Rajabhat. The director was grateful for her help and, therefore, allowed the transfer.

While being director of ERIC (the English Resource and Instruction Centre), she attended numerous training courses organised by the British Council in the country. Her overseas experience consisted of training courses in the UK and New Zealand. This rich experience of teaching English enabled her to be qualified to teach in the Rajabhat she is in working at present. The courses

relating to her expertise are mainly English for communication, and the methodology of teaching English. She taught daytime and weekend classes. Besides teaching, she was responsible for managerial work in her role as associate director of the language centre. At present, **Passorn** is working on her doctoral study in an international programme emphasising cross-cultural studies. She expressed her satisfaction with this study because it was based in a university located in a nearby province and she did not have to be away from her family. Thus, she could take care of her husband and children, and could frequently visit her mother.

The growth of her professional life, and the fulfillment of the teaching ideal originated in her professional development experiences which were gained formally, and informally. The British Council training courses ignited a deep involvement in making the communicative approach work in the secondary schools in Thailand. She held on to the process of communicative teaching, followed it, and adapted it to different settings. She devoted to her training duties because she believed in the communicative approach, and the communicative teaching process learned from the continual training courses by the British Council. A considerably strong impact of formal professional development courses can be seen in her learning and development process.

It is evidently clear that experiential learning plays an important role in her development. The knowledge gained from the formal courses were put into regular use in training duties. Regularly she was involved in the process of reflecting, evaluating and adjusting, and accommodating her training techniques, as well as materials used in the training. Her consistent attendance in formal courses enhanced her professional knowledge, and it was appropriated through practice in the training. Her formal professional knowledge and experiential knowledge activated each other in her professional development process. She also believed that her duties could make a contribution to the teaching of English in the secondary level and tertiary levels.

### 5.2.3 *Silk*

When the study began, **Silk** was four years from retirement age. He teaches in a Rajabhat located in the north of Bangkok. He is married with one child. He and his wife work at the same Rajabhat, but in different faculties. **Silk** has a good sense of humour, and a very positive attitude towards life. He is friendly and got on well with his colleagues. He was involved in various duties within the department and the university. He taught both daytime and evening classes on the main campus and its affiliates. His colleagues recognised him as an expert in the field of tourism, and supported him on any project he initiated.

His personal life revealed his independence and strong determination to get on in life and succeed. He spent his childhood with his uncle and aunt. They were very kind and encouraging to him. Unlike the other participants, there was no trace of an environment conducive to or structured for learning in the family. He entered the Buddhist novice-hood in his teenage years, and in the meantime was educated to a secondary level. **Silk** seemed to be keen on finding meaning in social references for the development of his life. The meaning interpreted was always in harmony with his determination and enthusiasm for improvement. As for his learning, he sought a conducive environment and immersed himself in it. He was devoted to learning, and engaged in it according to his preference, and personal satisfaction. During this study, he was learning to access resources from the Internet, and to sing. These skills are believed fruitful to tour guiding. The resources from the Internet were useful for his research. Being able to sing can improve the projection of his voice when conducting tour as a guide.

**Silk** was one of the pioneers in teaching business English, particularly English for tourism, and tourism management. **Silk** also has had interesting experiences in developing his English proficiency and professional knowledge. He earned his B.Ed. in English education, and M.A. in language and literature, focussing on English. He has also attended numerous training on teaching English and tourism. **Silk** has been selected as a case for this study because of his



remarkable way of improving his English proficient, and developing the knowledge of tour guiding, and management.

It was always his desire to be fluent in English, especially in the listening and speaking skills. As teacher, he thought he should be able to master these skills. He always sought opportunities to develop these skills, through working with native speakers, such as being trainers of the Thai language and culture. His method was proven successful, and thus gained him confidence, as well as beneficial to his teaching.

**Silk** seemed to be very willing to acquire more the knowledge relevant to what he has already had as a resource of his teaching. He always enjoys sharpening his teaching tools through immersion experience in which his keen sense of observation is efficiently put into use. What is worth noticeable is that enjoyment really coincides with his learning, and that he has pleasure in setting out to learn independently.

**Silk** incessantly cultivated his knowledge and skills in his own way until he was able to formulate the knowledge on tour guide principles as his version, which was found successful. He became knowledgeable in teaching tourism and tour guiding principles. He has a unique style of learning and developing himself.

**Silk** had strong support from his wife and daughter for his quest in learning. They also found enjoyment in his way of learning. Without their understanding, he would not have perceived a possibility to change his practical knowledge.

In the next section, accounts of valuable experience cultivated from work and life, and situated in the shared culture within the participants' contexts, are presented in the framework of the research questions. These interesting accounts have been co-constructed by the participants and the researcher through the process of respondent validation in a prolonged period and from a delightful relationship.

## 5.3 The key themes

There are ten key themes in the findings. Each is displayed in turn.

### 5.3.1 *Personal histories*

#### **The impact of family support and conducive learning environment**

##### **Nanta**

It was found in the data that career choices were based on a preference for English, the family environment conducive to education, and the family member's values. **Nanta** gave an account of her life relating to her parents' support of education,

‘At home, in our living room, my father put English dictionaries, cartoons and fairy tales for us to read whenever we wanted. My sister and I enjoyed reading those things.’

Her parents were educated and devoted their time to support their children in their education. She recounted,

‘My parents helped us with our homework. They helped explain our English homework. We felt that we were so lucky to get help from them.’

The supportive environment of English learning at home went along with interesting teaching activities at school, where she had an opportunity to interact with a Christian missionary who brought in fun activities in learning English.

‘My teacher was a Christian missionary. She involved us in activities such as games and songs. We had fun and enjoyed using English. Sometimes she brought her kids, and we could communicate with her kids when joining the activities.’

This was probably intended to make her become more enthusiastic in English. As she proceeded to higher school levels, she felt that she got better in English and her aptitude was developed higher than that in mathematics and science.

‘As I grew up, I knew that I came to like English more and more. I wasn’t really bad at maths, but I felt that I could do English better.’

Upon graduation from high school, she was able to pass the national entrance examination to study in the university that was the most prestigious for English language and literature. The national entrance examination was employed by the Ministry of Education to screen eligible high school students in public universities. The students with aptitude in science studied in scientific fields such as pure science, medical science, engineering, and architecture, whereas the students with the aptitude in languages and social studies studied in the humanities, or social sciences.

As for her career choice, **Nanta**’s family greatly influenced her decision. She revealed the reason behind the choice that she followed was her father’s advice, which was based on his perspective of the role of women and the advantage of being a teacher. She related his view,

‘It’s good for a woman to be a teacher because you can be with your family. When you become a teacher, you can be knowledgeable and can help your children with their study. Teachers usually have a long summer vacation. It’s a suitable time to be with your children.’

She agreed with her father’s view and took up teaching as a career because she considered that the roles of being a woman, a teacher, and a mother could be interrelated. As for her attitude towards being a teacher, she showed a positive view in this brief statement:

‘I like being a teacher. I like giving knowledge to the students.’

## **Passorn**

The interviews with **Passorn** reveal a long line in her personal history, from her experience of secondary school to the stage when she had to decide on her future career. **Passorn** had shown her enthusiasm for English since she was in secondary school. At that time her house was located near the river where some Europeans came to ski. She was excited to communicate with them in English. Her grandmother disapproved of her socialisation with foreigners, but Passorn had a high opinion of them and the benefit of practising English. She recounted this bold experience as follows:

‘I thought those foreigners were superb. I was not afraid to go to them and talk to them. It was the first time that I had friends who were foreigners. They told me about their country. Every weekend I went to talk to them. I found that my English was much better. I got the highest marks in class.’

*Being able to communicate with foreigners made her feel confident and enthusiastic in becoming better at learning English. It was a combination of joy and determination. She also had a positive attitude towards the language, as well as the people who spoke it.*

Her home environment served as a strong support. Her father was an inspiration and a model of an educated man who was proficient in English. He worked in a German company where English was a work language. He spoke English fluently, and occasionally spoke it to her. She looked up to his ability, and tried to seek methods to develop her English skills. She found her father’s collection of popular English songs as a great source of improvement. She told about that educative experience below.

‘I listened to his records over and over again. I remembered every word. I sang along, and I learned more words and expressions. This created a habit of listening to a chunk of words, or a whole sentence, instead of discrete words. I can still remember a lot of those songs now.’

Her ability in foreign languages, English and French, was a good basis for furthering her study in an academic programme with an emphasis on foreign languages. Actually, she did not intend to be a teacher, and she was still uncertain about taking this role. In those days, social convention influenced the decisions on choices of academic programmes when entering universities. The Arts and Teacher Education programmes dealing with foreign languages were typically preferred by high school graduates who studied in the language programme. **Passorn** followed the convention.

‘I really didn’t want to be a teacher. I didn’t intend to be a teacher. In those days, if you were good at languages, you either went to the Faculty of Arts, or Faculty of Education.’

Also, her mother did not allow her to attend universities outside Bangkok. Her exam scores in the National Entrance Examination placed her in a teacher education programme at the most prestigious university in Bangkok. She was then directed into pre-service teacher training. She accepted that she was happy with this, especially the practical training, or student teaching.

### **Positive view of life and an independent decision on a career choice**

#### **Silk**

**Silk**’s biography revealed a missing aspect on his family and childhood. He lived with his aunt and uncle, who brought him up instead of his parents. There is no evidence from his narration on the supportive environment that influenced his preference for English and career choice.

Instead, his strong personality traits of being determined and unwavering were distinct. His strong liking for English was rather unexplainable. A classroom event that he recounted was threatening to a preference for English, but to him it did not have any impact on his attitude. The event showed punishment applied as part of teaching English. The teacher in his primary school was very strict and mean, but he did not feel timid. He said,

‘That teacher liked to pinch my friend on his belly because he didn’t learn the words, but I was not intimidated by such punishment.’

**Silk** did not feel discouraged by his behaviour, he even scored highly in the English subject.

**Silk**’s decision on a career was definitely his own. It was based purely on his judgement. When he finished secondary education, there were two alternatives open to him: studying in the teacher’s college, or in the school as a postman. He told of reasons for his judgement as follows:

‘I imagined myself as being in the postman’s uniform—wearing a kaki shirt, and a pair of kaki trousers. Then I considered that a teacher should have a better image than a postman riding an old bicycle, ringing its bell when delivering letters. I decided that I didn’t want to wear such a uniform, and do what the postman would do. At that time I didn’t know things would change. Now that pathetic image of the postman does not exist. The postman now earns more than a teacher. I had no parents to guide me. I was a novice, studying in a secondary level. At that time I also thought that I was shy, and that if I was trained as teacher, I would become more confident.

His career decision was based on his sense of personal development.

### **5.3.2 Professional lives**

#### **Nanta**

She has been working in several Rajabhat institutes for 35 years. She has been recognised as a leading professional in teaching English. Her education and professional development was acquired both in Thailand and overseas. She received her B.A. with honours in English from one of the most reputable universities in Thailand. She started her teaching career at a teacher’s college in the Northeast of Thailand. After a year of teaching, she furthered her study to a master’s degree level in comparative literature at the same university. It took her three years to complete her study.

**Nanta** has had an extensive experience of formal professional development in a native-speaking country. She got another master's degree in material development from a university in the UK. Some years later, she was awarded a fellowship to the USA on a short training course for an understanding of American culture. Her latest overseas experience was a one-year training course on research and management in the USA.

**Nanta** has proven very capable of managing knowledge and resources from overseas experience for the support of her professional growth. Accumulative formal study and training experience has enriched her scholastic abilities, and thus has enabled her to pursue professional advancement. She has become a recognised academic in the field of teaching English as a foreign language because of her persistently self-directed professional development. Traces of changes in her practice due to the impact of her formal and informal learning can be found, and the pattern of her learning, especially the distinctive coexistence of both types of learning, are very interesting.

Besides her self-motivated, continual professional development, **Nanta's** personal dispositions and her personal life facilitated and activated her professional life, particularly her academic status in the Rajabhat circle. She is well organised, her work is well-structured and she has concentrated to a large extent on her desire to reach her intended professional goal. Furthermore, her life reveals the clear influence of her upbringing, including her present family on her professional development. Her personal and professional life has been a phenomenon worth studying.

### **Passorn**

She had worked as a teacher for thirty-two years when this study was conducted. She held an M.Ed. in English education. She worked at both secondary and tertiary levels. She has been recognised as an outstanding trainer of English teachers at the secondary level. Her training materials have been widely used in training courses for secondary school teachers.

**Passorn** started teaching in a secondary school as a French teacher. Later she transferred to another school and taught English. After a while she furthered her study at a graduate level, which focused on teaching English. Upon her return to work at the same school, she was asked to be on the working committee to run a regional English resource centre. With her qualifications relating to her future responsibilities, she was able to continually attend training courses organized by the British Council in Thailand. The effectiveness of the training system successfully convinced her, remarkably altered her teaching perspectives, and re-directed her practice. She fully devoted herself to training duties, to train secondary school teachers to employ the communicative approach in teaching English. These duties led her to more training and useful experiences in native speaking countries, such as New Zealand and England. In the meantime, her devotion was rewarded. She became the Director of the ERIC Centre, and was awarded the status of model teacher, and outstanding teacher.

The growth of her professional life and the fulfilment of her teaching ideal originated in her professional development experiences which were gained formally, and informally. Some years later, when there was a position offered at one Rajabhat, she transferred there and continued training teachers of English at the primary and secondary school levels. At the Rajabhat Institute, she became the Deputy Director of the Language Centre. As a teacher, she was responsible for teaching courses focusing on developing English communication skills, and methodology of teaching English, which includes teaching theoretical parts, preparing students for the practicum, and supervising student teaching in schools. Her expertise in teaching was accepted by both her colleagues and students. The latter praised her as an ideal and model teacher, whose teaching style was distinguished, being the closest to the learner-centred approach. **Passorn** seems to persevere in her learning for the development of her profession.



## **Silk**

**Silk** has been teaching English for over thirty years. He was one of the pioneers in teaching business English in Rajabhats. His expertise is in English for tourism, and tourism management. **Silk** has also had interesting experiences in developing his English proficiency and professional knowledge. He earned his B.Ed. in English education, and three years later he continued his one-year study for a higher certificate in English. He returned to teach for a year. He furthered his study through a masters degree in English language and literature. It took him three years to complete. He has also attended numerous training courses on teaching English and tourism. **Silk** has been selected as a case for this study because of his remarkable way of improving his English proficiency, and developing the knowledge of tour guiding and management.

**Silk** seemed to be very willing to acquire more knowledge relevant to what he already has as a resource for his teaching. He always enjoys sharpening his teaching tools through immersion experience, in which his keen sense of observation is efficiently put into use. **Silk** incessantly cultivated his knowledge and skills in his own way until he became knowledgeable in teaching tourism and tour guiding principles. He has a unique style of learning and developing himself.

### **5.3.3      *Professional development***

#### **Formal professional development**

## **Nanta**

In her years at the university, she related that her skills in English were developed, but

‘I studied what I was told. The content was given by the lecturers. We just had to learn it. We didn’t learn how to be critical.’

However, there was one impression she had. It was about a lecturer who made the lessons interesting and enjoyable. This is how she described the lecturer:

‘She taught *Macbeth* by Shakespeare. Instead of having us memorise the important verses, she dramatised them. She acted out the witches’ part, Lady Macbeth, for example. We enjoyed and understood the scene, the thinking and feelings of the characters.’

**Nanta** was awarded a bachelors degree cum laude in English language and literature. After her graduation, she became a lecturer in a teachers college in a north eastern province for one year. The following year, she decided to further her study at a masters degree level in comparative literature in the same university. This time, she seemed to be satisfied because

‘The assigned work involved me to practise critical thinking skills in the process of synthesising the ideas from the reading materials into writing. I also learned that in a literary work, how the literary devices used are crucial in understanding it. In the undergraduate level, I never realised this importance.’

**Nanta** spent three years studying for the masters degree, and went back to teach afterwards. She attended some training courses arranged by the Supervisory Unit. Ten years later, a persistent desire and determination to improve her learning through an immersion experience in a native speaking country, and to be formally trained in the teaching of English, motivated her to write to the supervisors requesting support for attendance at a training course in a native speaking country. Her request was considered, but she had to take an English proficiency test. She got the highest mark on the IELTS test, and this meant that she was awarded a scholarship to study on a masters programme. The result was higher than she had expected.

She attended the programme in a university in London. The focus was on English teaching and material development. Study in the UK had granted her an experience at being trained formally in teaching English, and an opportunity to collect materials for later use.

Her ceaseless desire to learn in a native-speaking country later motivated her to seek opportunities through the US agent of educational services. First, she obtained a fellowship to attend a seminar on American culture in the USA. About ten years later, she won another fellowship to attend a training course on research and management in the same country. In the first trip, she learned about the multicultural aspects of the US. On the second trip, she learned about management skills, research and practice in second language teaching. She found that the seminars enriched her professional experience.

‘I was able to travel in the USA, see the diversity of the culture, and learn about literature. I think this was a better chance than being a student because I was able to meet the important people in the top management level, such as the president of the university, and high ranking officials. Besides, I was able to attend lectures by prominent scholars in second language teaching, such as Savignon. I could also observe classes taught in the second language teaching programme.’

### **Passorn**

According to **Passorn**, she was trained to be an English teacher in her four-year undergraduate study. She expressed her disappointment with the instruction style of the lecturers.

‘They were very strict teachers. We had to give the right answers. If not, we were punished in a strange way, such as standing on one leg. They also picked the way we dressed. They called us with strange names. We had to put up with their strictness. I hated it. It had nothing to do with our responsibility or intelligence.’

Those are her bad and resentful memories. The only good impression she had of teachers is a lecturer who showed understanding for the students, and who applied different teaching methods.

‘She was young, and open-minded. She was kind, approachable, and understanding. She just got her masters degree from overseas.’

The conclusion of her study in that English education programme was that her English and French competence was improved, but for teaching techniques, she ‘hardly got anything’.

After her graduation, she entered a teaching career as a French teacher at a secondary school. A few years later she also taught English. She then decided to further her study in TEFL to a master degree level. It seemed that she still could not find an ideal teaching method even at this level. She found that she learned a great deal from teaching theories, but none of the practical teaching methods fit the Thai context. However, she was able to distinguish teaching methods applied by the Thai and native speaking lecturers. The latter tended to use ‘more practical approaches’ and focus more on the teaching process, which was clearer.

‘Lecturers with doctoral degrees taught us lots of theories. When we presented our teaching in the classroom, they just said ‘OK’. I knew that it wasn’t OK. I preferred the native speaker teachers’ methods. They were more down to earth, with clearer approaches, and processes.’

When she was finished with her study, she returned to her school with higher qualifications, but continued ‘teaching the book’—meaning following the course book and trying to cover the required content by the end of the semester.

A few years later the Department of General Education cooperated with the British Council to support the teaching of English in the secondary level. The Department of General Education was in charge of setting up an ERIC (English Resources and Instruction Centre) in every region. A secondary school of each region served as the site, and allocated a centre managing committee consisting of teachers from that particular school. The British Council provided training courses to the management team. Then, the trainers in the management team would provide training to school teachers in the region. The director of the school in which **Passorn** worked perceived a possibility of her managing an ERIC from her qualifications. She gave an account of that event:

‘I got a masters degree. He viewed my qualifications as beneficial to the proposal of running an ERIC. The management team had to be trained. One of the committee members had to be trained as trainer, but s/he had to be selected through an English proficiency test.’

Seeing her qualification as a prospect of her running the ERIC, the director made a proposal to the Department of General Education. One criterion of being eligible to set up the ERIC was that one of the committee members had to have a high proficiency in English. She proudly recaptured the event that designated the chance of her school being the site of the ERIC.

‘On that day the staff from the Department of General Education came over. Teachers from other schools in the area also came to my school because other schools also proposed to be ERIC. All candidates took an English test. There was also an oral test. The result came out that I got the highest marks. My school could host the ERIC, and I was selected to be trained as trainer.’

She attended regular training courses organised by the British Council, annually and occasionally. Later, when she took up the manager position, the work was doubled. Having to fulfil this dual role stimulated her awareness and motivation to develop her knowledge and competence. As manager, she had to lead her team to upgrade the regional secondary school English teachers’ competence through intensive English programmes. As trainer, she had to update and maintain her English and teaching competence in order to perform effectively. She said,

‘I had to form the organising team, invite speakers and prepare materials for training. We had to attend meetings with other trainers for this purpose. We had to pass the proficiency test every year. Whenever there were experts on teaching English coming over, we had to attend the workshop.’

**Passorn**, as manager, had to be responsible for finding the funding for the courses, and steering her staff to organise the courses, as well as forming teams to train teachers. Working at the ERIC Centre was an extra duty apart from the heavy teaching loads. Only strong commitment could motivate her and her colleagues to continue such hard work. She narrated her difficulty as follows:

‘I had to do everything from finding the funds, forming the organising team, constructing materials, contacting trainers, and being a trainer myself. We had to be sure that those secondary school teachers could really teach their classes upon their return. Afterwards, we had to visit them, observe their classes and give suggestions to them as a follow-up process. I remembered that I just had my new car. I had to drive it on a very badly conditioned road to visit the teachers. The road was full of dust. It was the route of lorries, and very dangerous. You know how lorry drivers drive. I never got paid for either the petrol, or the maintenance cost for my car. But when I got to the schools and could help the teachers solve their problems, all the thoughts of being in danger were gone. Those teachers really needed help.’

That type of experience was enriching for her practice. Her English proficiency and her teaching skills were immensely improved through the six years of work at the ERIC Centre.

Besides attending several courses by the British Council within the country, **Passorn** was sent to the UK and New Zealand for more training. The courses reinforced her professional knowledge and skills. Besides managing the ERIC, she did counselling work, and assisted the school director to do extra work. When there was a vacant position in the present work place, she came to take a test, and passed it. Her reputation as a model teacher, and her experience as manager of the ERIC, contributed to her advancement to becoming a lecturer, and to her teaching and training. During the data collection of the study, she was studying in a doctoral programme in Thailand.

## **Silk**

**Silk**’s formal professional development is not as distinctive as his informal learning. Like other lecturers, he attended many courses in English and tourism. The formal course that marked a change in his teaching experience was that on the basic knowledge for being a tour guide. An opportunity came to him when he had to drive his wife to her weekend classes at a university near Bangkok, where a three-month tour guide course was offered. The course provided him with background information on Thai history and culture, including tourist attractions. Although he found that the course was very useful, he felt that it

was ‘too compressed’, with different dimensions of information to cover. He did not get to teach English for tourism until some time later. **Silk** was also trained in some workshops arranged through collaboration between the Supervisory Unit and the Tourism Organisation of Thailand. The courses included tour planning, ticketing, and eco-tourism.

He did not get to utilise the basic tour guide knowledge in practice until years later when his teachers’ college offered him a business English programme, and English for tourism became available. With his background knowledge on tour guiding, he was requested to teach the course. He found that he required further information. It was his teaching responsibility, as well as his desire to ‘do a good job’, that motivated him to search for more knowledge in English for tourism.

‘I found that the knowledge from the short course wasn’t enough. . . . As teacher, I should know more of what the real situations would be like.’

He wanted to know more about other essential aspects of tour guide knowledge, especially the whole process of the tour guide. He pointed out a problem within the course that he attended was that the time was too short. Therefore, the speakers did not deal with the process of tour guiding in its entirety.

### **Informal professional development**

#### **Nanta**

**Nanta** loved to read, and collected materials on teaching. When being overseas, she took the chance to buy books in teaching English. She invested in books, especially those published in recent years and that were not available in Thailand. These books became resources for her informal learning with a specific purpose. Her informal learning was derived from a combination of interesting factors. The first was from her enthusiasm, and self-directedness for learning. The second was derived from her own strategies to counteract the unfairness of the bureaucratic system in the workplace.

In the past, within teachers colleges or Rajabhat systems, recruitment was managed by the central Department of Teacher Education, or later the Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council. The selected candidates were sent to fill vacant positions in different places. Once a candidate held tenure in one work place, it meant s/he held a permanent position there. If s/he wanted to transfer to another place, with no vacant position, s/he could go there, but had to accept the condition that s/he worked there with less chance of promotion than those who held permanent positions. Furthermore, appraisal for promotion in the former teachers colleges and Rajabhats was heavily based on criteria of the quantity of teaching load, and extra responsibilities other than teaching. The combination of these aspects became an unjust practice in the bureaucratic system, and deterred **Nanta's** career advancement. Due to her husband's career involving judicial duties which required him to relocate to different provinces, she had to transfer to different teachers colleges/Rajabhats. She recaptured the frequent transfers:

‘I asked my husband to request for a transfer to a province where there is a teachers college or Rajabhat institute so that we didn’t have to separate. I could have a place to work. Our kids could be with us in the same province.’

Often the transfer made her less eligible to get promoted because she was not a lecturer with a permanent position in that institution. She also was less interested in undertaking management work. She preferred to teach. She resentfully described her situation:

‘Most administrators of the Rajabhat institutes always took me strictly as a non-permanent lecturer at their institutions even though I carried a full teaching load. They viewed me as not giving an on-going contribution because I stayed with them for a few years, and then I had to move. No matter how much workload I took, I was not eligible. Besides, the teaching load also didn’t count because I didn’t do extra work. In reality, how can people with 12-15 hour teaching loads do any extra work? They don’t do a good job in either in teaching, or administrative work.’

She coped by managing her time effectively, investing in resources and ignoring extra pay gained from weekend courses. This demonstrated a strong



commitment facilitated by her personal attributes. She pursued her goal with continuity, consistency and devotion. She described her perseverance:

‘That’s why I turned to the academic track. I taught no weekend or evening classes so as to devote my time to research in order to gain the academic title, the associate professor. In doing this, I have to be with it, be perseverant. I collected materials when I went abroad. I bought update books, around the year 2000 onwards. Those books I can hardly find in Thailand. I invested in them. Then I used them as resources for my research. It took me seven years to finish my project. And finally, I achieved the title of associate professor’.

**Nanta** always sought or grasped opportunities for her learning. During data collection she was engaging in classroom research, working on how to make the students improve their understanding of reading texts. At that time the University granted funding for an individual research project in order to develop teaching and learning. She had no hesitation about involvement in it.

Also, she was also involved in a research project which, when completed, can render her eligible for the title of professor. She has been working hard to attain it. It is again her desire to be one of the few professors in English in Thailand.

‘I looked at a record on lecturers of English in Thailand. Most of them stopped doing research after they attained the title of associate professor. Some professors have retired, and are retiring. Not many left.’

### **Passorn**

**Passorn**’s informal learning was not as conspicuous as her formal learning. However, it evidently occurred alongside formal learning, particularly when she put her received knowledge and skills into practice in her role as trainer. Her work in terms of academic aspects included material construction for training, demonstrating the methodology of adapting materials, and how to use them, coaching the trainees in the actual contexts at the follow-up stage, and providing support to the teachers in their teaching. Alongside these processes,

she evaluated most aspects of the training and follow-up. This is evident in her account:

‘I tried out my materials in the training to see if they fit particular groups of trainees. I kept adapting the materials until they became a collection of resources. I adapted the methods used in the training. I followed the trainees to their schools and helped them. In a way, I wanted to make sure that the materials and the methodology worked, and that the trainees were confident in employing them. I usually analysed problems that came up, and worked with the teachers to solve them.’

This is a close link between formal and informal learning. After five years of working at a Rajabhat, she attempted to conduct research work on remedial teaching. She described that

‘I started this project while working as a staff member at the language centre.’ It progressed very slowly because of my administrative and teaching duties. Partial findings from the data revealed some productive results of remedial teaching which has activated the students’ learning in the classrooms.

Upon the completion of her doctoral study, she had a firm intention to continue working on the research. Reflection on her previous working behaviour made her plan to re-engineer her working style. She said,

‘I know now what type of work I should not do, and I should refuse to do it. I have thought about which direction I should be going to.’

## **Silk**

For **Silk**, awareness of lacking some knowledge in teaching motivated him to step out of his school setting to the real source of knowledge on tourism. He felt that having the content knowledge about tourist attractions was not sufficient for good teaching. The knowledge of tour processes and current trends and styles in guiding tours were probably much more important. He expressed his need as follows:

‘I wanted to know more about how they (the guides) conduct the tour, the whole process of the tour. I went to the airport to watch how the professional guides did it from the beginning, the transfer-in stage when they receive the tourists there and place them on the coach bus. I asked the young guides how they did it. They explained the process in detail when they knew that I was a teacher. I learned a lot from them.’

He had an awareness and positive attitude towards learning. He set a goal to gain knowledge, and worked to achieve it. He explained,

‘I set problems about what to teach and what to know more. Then I find answers. I know what I still don’t know about.’

**Silk** was enthusiastic, open and receptive in his learning. He was not afraid to seek knowledge. When he was interested in knowing about the temples in Bangkok, this is what he did.

‘On weekends I went to many interesting tourist attractions where I could meet tour guides, watching them working, listening to what they were describing to tourists, talking to or asking them about their job. I followed the guides around the important temples in Bangkok for years to see how they set the route from one temple to another, how they described the information to tourists.’

### **Strategies in learning about tour guiding principles and tourist information**

When teaching tourism, he realised that he should teach not only information about tourist attractions, but also strategies of conducting tours.

The following are ways he learned in order to compile a body of knowledge on English for tourism:

1. Asking and observing the professional guides in real situations inside the country and overseas. The cost of learning was at his own expense.

‘I am very lucky because my family and I love travelling. When we could

afford to go abroad, we never hesitated to do. We like to take trips. We went on overseas trips several times: Australia twice, and Europe twice. We three went together. On the trips I observed how the guides conducted their tours, how they made tourists feel comfortable, and that the trips were theirs. In Australia, the guide drove the bus as well as described the places. He seemed to know every bit of information. He made useful suggestions to the tourists, such as what to notice, which souvenirs were genuine Australian made. We met many professional tour guides. Their techniques were superb and worth observing. Now I can say that I always enjoy touring with the pros.'

This strategy was possible because of his family. He added,

'I would like to give credit to my family. They are my moral support. We have the same interest. All of us love travelling. This helps a lot. If they don't like travelling, or like other things, this couldn't help me acquire experience.'

2. Studying guidebooks, brochures and pamphlets which have been collected from many places, and over time.

'Whenever I took a trip, I collected brochures and pamphlets. My wife and daughter laughed at me because I seemed to carry loads of them. I bought and kept a lot of guide books. I have acquired them so much that I can set up a small library of my own.'

3. Having a critical eye in observing professional guides.

'Some guides gave too much information to tourists. Some Thai guides put too much emphasis on etiquette. They kept explaining about why people were taking shoes off, and proper seating positions in the temple. Of course, that kind of information is important, but you should be aware of the tourists' attention at that very moment, not just giving information to them.'

4. Arranging tours as students' field trips, and accompanying them on the trips. He talked about his deliberate and intentional observations this way:

‘I observed and absorbed the styles of conducting tours from the trips. In Thailand, much emphasis is on entertaining the tourists. My experience from the trips leads me to conclude that management of tours is very important. Management of such aspects as accommodation, food, and tourists’ interests are in the first priority, not the content of the information.’

#### 5. Learning from local resources. **Silk** recounted another way of learning,

‘My trips to tutor the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University students around Thailand have widened my learning and experience on tourism. I asked for information from the *samlor* (tricycle cyclists for hire), and vendors in the streets and markets. I liked to hire a *samlor* to take me around and he would give me information about places.’

He searched for local knowledge which reflects the native’s perspectives of the places. This local knowledge does not exist in the tourists’ guide books.

#### 6. Being a speaker on tourism

Being a speaker on tourism in Thailand, and teaching tourism, enhanced his learning in tourism. A memorable experience was when his wife coordinated with a tour agent to arrange a study tour for Vietnamese delegations. There was a presentation on tourism in Thailand. Lecturers in his institute were knowledgeable in this topic, but they could not give a presentation in English. Therefore, he had an opportunity to provide the knowledge on tourism to foreigners.

#### **Learning to develop English proficiency**

Self-questioning and self-awareness are also the factors that drove him to improve his English competence. Reflecting on the previous experiences about a self-directed search for knowledge and skills in English, including opportunities to practise and improve his English, he shared these two episodes; the first was how he improved his listening skills:

‘Early in my teaching career, I passed my weekends in the cinemas, watching Hollywood movies. I would choose the ones shown without the Thai subtitles. I watched them like crazy. I had a girlfriend at that time, but I didn’t take her with me. It was a different purpose. I went to the movies because I wanted to practise my English.’

The reason he had to watch movies ‘like crazy’ was because he realised that, as an English teacher, he needed to improve what he lacked. During his university years, he had very little chance to practise listening, because the language laboratory was under repair for a long time.

The second episode that he shared with the researcher is how he found opportunities to interact with native speakers, and to experience the native speakers’ socio-cultural life. He decided to work as a trainer of the Thai language and culture for American Peace Corps volunteers during several summer vacations. It was hard work, but what he gained was very worthwhile.

‘We were assigned to be with a small group of two to three volunteers. During the day we taught them Thai, using the method called ‘the silent way’. Then Thai cultural issues were also taught to them. At nights, there were open sessions, with raised questions and ways to tackle them among trainers, both Thai and American. It was such a great experience. I felt like I was working in a native speaking country.’

**Silk’s** needs and enthusiasm to learn for improvement coincided with his enjoyment of learning. He tended to seek his own ways to learn and enjoy in a fun atmosphere, though learning and experience were obtained at his labour and expense. When asked which mode was his preference, he replied:

‘Structured seminars and workshops were worth attending because speakers have studied about the topics they dealt with. You can interact with native speakers. The most important part is you can share your knowledge with other participants. As for myself, I found that informal learning is more direct for me because I know what I want.’

He stated his intention to contribute to teaching tourism as he was compiling a text book comprising information from his knowledge and direct experience in teaching and touring.

‘I hope that younger teachers will benefit from my book. When my book is completed, my knowledge will be shared with colleagues and other teachers in the Rajabhat community.’

Recently he has finished a research work on tourism as a requirement for attaining the academic title of assistant professor. He said,

‘I have two years to go for my retirement. I need to do it.’

#### **5.3.4 *Impact of professional development***

The impact of professional development can be perceived in the teachers’ thinking on the integration of knowledge for teaching, as well as on their practice. The extent of the impact varies from one participant to another, depending on their beliefs of what they taught and how they taught particular courses.

#### **Nanta**

**Nanta** gained insights into teaching English and material development from the course in the UK. She adopted some approaches for developing materials for her classroom, and made them more suitable to the students’ levels in terms of language and content. She claimed that there was a change in her concept of teaching.

‘I gave more opportunities for students to work in groups. I tried to go closely toward cooperative learning. They could help each other more in learning.’

She constructed handouts on literature for students, following the guided course description from the national curriculum. The thought behind material selection was an awareness of the students’ ages and interests, an acknowledgement of the requirements of the curriculum, and an intention of stimulating a moral judgement in the students.

‘The best thing literature gives us is indirect moral teaching. Literature educates us about

life, makes us understand human beings and their thoughts. Literature teaches morality directly.'

Her awareness of the students' language proficiency is reflected in her selection of texts for the students:

'Texts concerning agreeing or disagreeing with the authors, and moral issues have to be included later when the students' language competence is high enough and also when they have adequate reading experience. The texts for students should be accessible at the beginning. They shouldn't be difficult.'

The awareness of all aspects concerning the students emerged from these factors: her experience of teaching over time, and repetitively, her firm background of English, and her being an avid reader. She explains,

'My English background, my analytical and critical skills in reading make me able to read, understand and select the texts for the students. I am also able to simplify details in the texts and explain them to make the students understand more. . . Experience of teaching reading and literature has been accumulated for a long time. It gives me background knowledge to adjust the materials and teaching style to match each group of students.'

She tried to be attentive to the students' context, and preferred to use what she called 'flexible methods' for different groups of students.

**Nanta** stated that it was not easy to trace the impact of professional development on her practice. Professional development for her is 'incremental'. She explained,

'It is difficult to trace back what knowledge I gained from what development activity. It's like when you study in university. Your knowledge develops as you pass from year one, to year two, and finally to year four. It just accumulates. You cannot trace that this bit of knowledge is from year one, or three. Just like professional development, I see it as 'incremental development'. It's like a jigsaw.'

However, she could see some changes in her awareness. She stated that she was more conscious of the student context. She employed more flexible teaching



methods. She emphasised that ‘good methods are the mixture of several methods’. **Nanta**’s knowledge gained from professional development has been assimilated into her knowledge and experience of teaching, and they have been reconstructed to another body of knowledge available for use in teaching.

In discussing the effectiveness of professional development, **Nanta** pointed out that it is connected to students’ achievement. This depends heavily on the learners’ awareness of their duties. Professional development establishes a certain role for the teacher, but the students have to realise theirs is the learners’ role. She gave her opinion that

‘The teacher is a resource person in the classroom. From my experiences of being a student at many levels, inside the country and overseas, I believe that 90 per cent of achievement is on the students. For example when teaching, I give well-organised handouts to the students, with clear steps to follow. Students must be prepared for the lesson, and for the tests which are continual, and didn’t include high marks.’

However, she observed that Thai students needed close guidance in studying, such as points of emphasis in reading texts. Thai students need to be trained in critical thinking skills. She related this experience:

‘Thai students had to be guided to what they should focus on in reading. In critical reading, the students could comprehend the text, but they couldn’t analyse the author’s purpose of writing. When I told them how to analyse the purpose, they understood it.’

As for the role of the students, **Nanta** stressed that students’ achievement can become possible when the students are aware of their role as learners. She gave this view:

‘Students should know that teaching in class is just a guideline. They don’t understand their role as learners and they don’t seem to find their learning strategies. Of course we cannot put all the blame on the students. They haven’t been trained in critical thinking skills before.’

## **Passorn**

When asked about the impact of professional development on their teaching, each participant expressed different views. **Passorn** clearly and willingly accepted that the British Council training courses really had a strong impact on both her teaching, and training styles. She could trace back how it caused a change in her practice. The episode of ateaching demonstration by a trainer obviously showed a linkage between the training course and her practice that had been changed.

‘The trainer (from the British Council) demonstrated his teaching within a real classroom. He used the communicative approach, but he didn’t use English as a medium of instruction. He taught the students to greet, and introduce themselves to their friends, using the Esperanto language. First, he presented the language item, then he had the students practise it, and later he got them involved in the activities using the language to communicate to each other. It worked! The students knew in what situation they could use the language item to speak to their friends.’

She was still not convinced until she tried to experiment with the communicative approach in her class. It really worked. And the students enjoyed the activities. This created a new awareness as well as a positive attitude towards the approach. Her teaching behaviour was also changed.

‘Since then I completely changed my teaching process. I used English almost all of the time in class. I regularly critiqued my teaching in my reflection: Did I teach the course book, or the students? What more is needed for preparation?’

The integration of English language knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, including the sustainability of knowledge from professional development, was evident in her teaching of the methodology course which will be dealt with in the section on classroom practice.

As previously stated, **Passorn** frequently showed her appreciation of the training courses run by the British Council. She considered that the British Council training was an ideal model, with effective procedure such as the

teaching process, enforcement of the training role, encouragement of autonomous training management, and required feedback reports.

The British Council training courses stirred her awareness not only in teaching, but in her role as trainer as well. She had to change her teaching before going out to train other teachers. She said, 'If I don't change my teaching, who is going to believe me that it (the communicative approach) works'. She was confident that effective teaching was possible. When preparing to teach, she looked for appropriate teaching approaches, not the course book methods. For training, she tended to select materials, and techniques, suitable for the trainees' contexts. In conclusion, the British Council training courses had a sustainable impact on her awareness of the roles of trainer and teacher. It can also be said that the change leads to her being rewarded as a 'Model Teacher' and an 'Outstanding Teacher'. Her devotion to the improvement of English teaching in the secondary level has been frequently admired. **Passorn** proudly related that whenever she met these teachers, they told her that they immensely gained a lot of knowledge and skills in English and teaching English from her, and the training. Unfortunately, she said, these teachers who perceived the benefits of teaching English by the communicative approach were retired, or going retire from teaching and training duties early.

**Passorn** additionally recounted her current experience relating to the impact of professional development courses from the British Council while studying in a doctoral programme. She was requested to teach Thai to the international graduate students. She structured her teaching process, using the three Ps, as trained.

'In planning to teach Thai for communication, I do it the same way as teaching English for communication. I think about what I should do to lay a background for the learners. For example, if they have to use expressions in shopping, I'll have to teach them numbers and how to count, including colours if this piece of information is needed in buying things. Then I give a test to see if the learners have learned about this information. Finally, I present the language items and expressions used for shopping, and have the learners role play in order to practice using them.'

About half way through the course of teaching, she found that the feedback from the students was positive. This made her believe that the three Ps was an effective teaching process for teaching any language for communication. She was grateful that she had been trained to know and use such communicative teaching strategies.

The impact of the British Council Training is not only on her teaching and training role, but it has immensely contributed to her professional growth. She revealed that without the chance of being trained by the British Council, she would not have come this far. She explained,

‘The knowledge from the training boosted my potential to work effectively, and in various roles. The director recognised my abilities. He allowed me to transfer to teach at a Rajabhat, and here I got a privilege to further my study for a doctorate although I was fifty-one when requesting for permission to study.’

## **Silk**

Years of experience in observing professional guides within the country and around the world ‘revolutionised’ **Silk**’s teaching. This is evident in

- a focus on practice; the ‘how to’, specific and relevant to each tour.
- a revision of the content, specific and relevant to each type of tour. an emphasis on a relaxed atmosphere in tour guiding.
- a stress on tour routing, bits of information about places along the trip.
- An encouragement of developing a tourist guide’s awareness of tourists, or ‘customer’s culture’ and needs

**Silk** became very resourceful in tourist attractions all over Thailand, and in applying strategies to raise an awareness of the tourist guides, including the sensitivity they should have.

‘Tourists of different age groups need different kinds of care and attention. You cannot drag the elderly people to walk over hills. If the original route was to trek on hills, you have to re-route it, otherwise your trip would be a torture. The honeymooners would

not want a lot of your information. They just want to be together.’

### ***5.3.5 Prominent characteristics of effective professional development***

**Passorn** was directly influenced by formal professional development activities. It was interesting to analyse with her the characteristics of ‘very effective’ professional development training courses. The characteristics are stated as follows:

The training course must have a ‘definite goal’, and must be ‘directed towards the actual application’. The training course by the British Council was firstly organised to train teachers to be trainers of secondary school English teachers in the area under the responsibility of each ERIC Centre. In the following courses, training courses were organised to keep the trainers’ competence up to the expected standards.

1. When the trainers acquired the knowledge and skills, they trained the other teachers in the form of INSET courses, and supported the teachers in the follow-up stage at their schools.
2. The trainers were qualified native speaker experts who were fully experienced on their topics. Their knowledge was mainly drawn from their expertise and research.
3. The courses were an integration of the English proficiency and English language teaching methodology. Each course included language functions, language content, methodology, and how to select appropriate language functions for each level of student. They ‘covered every skill of teaching activity arrangement, classroom management, and material development’.
4. The courses were implemented intensively for a period of two weeks up to one month, and continually for every three or six months.
5. There was a systematic evaluation of the training and trainees’ knowledge and performance. Trainers’ classrooms were observed. They were periodically called in to take the proficiency test.

6. The training courses emphasised practice -- learning by doing. Trainees were trained as they were supposed to perform in the real context. She described,

‘Trainees were trained purposefully, trained as trainers-to-be. Teaching demonstrations were done with real classes. Demonstration could prove that certain teaching techniques could be used to teach any language in any context.’

7. Awareness of trainers’ effective role in further training secondary school teachers was emphasised. The awareness was bound with responsibility and consistent hard work.
8. Practicability and sustainability of the training was regularly followed up.

This type of professional development course was recognised by **Passorn** as having a sustainable impact on her practice.

#### **5.3.6 *The teachers’ beliefs***

##### **Nanta**

She had an unwavering belief in flexible teaching. Flexibility of teaching depends on the student context. The ‘overview of the course’ does not change. Teaching principles and strategies have to be changed. She elaborated on this belief as follows:

‘The teaching process, materials and content depend on the student context. The overview of the course does not change, but the materials are changed. The principles and strategies to make them learn are different in each course. A good teacher must be flexible. There is no absolute teaching method. What should be principally held is the context. What is used in teaching should fit the context.’

When asked if she put an emphasis on teaching methods, and if she regularly developed or modified them, she replied,

‘Teaching students in the higher education level needs no methods to lure them to learn.

What is more important is the content.'

Another belief reflected consistently in her material selection. It is her strong belief in exposing the unabridged version of reading texts to the students in order that they become familiar with the authentic texts, and with reading skills developed from her class, they would be able to read any materials in English. She expected the students to read the texts on their own because she believed that

'A reading course tends to be learner-centred by nature. The students have to read a lot and have to read on their own. If the teacher and students read together in class, the students will not learn anything.'

She perceived that literature is a foundation of language improvement. People who study literature are able to organise ideas and write better. Also, literature can create understanding about life, and provide moral issues. She explained,

'Literature educates us about life, makes us understand human beings and their thoughts. Literature teaches morality indirectly.'

When organising reading materials for students, the sequence followed the plan which was in accordance with her belief. The selections that improve the students' English competence came first. The texts based on the author's ideas and moral issues should come in when the students had adequate reading experience. Texts 'should not be too difficult at the beginning'.

### **Passorn**

She had a firm belief in the four aspects of teaching:

1. the teaching process;
2. the use of English as a medium of instruction;
3. the relaxed atmosphere of the classroom; and
4. good teaching preparation leading to the students' better learning.

The three P's process (presentation, practice, and production) was employed in both of her classes. She used English as a medium of instruction in her English for communication class. She enforced the classroom expressions to be used by the English teacher education students when they demonstrated their teaching. She asserted:

‘English should be used almost all of the time. English as a medium of instruction is a way to improve students’ competence... Involving the students in the communicative activities in class is providing them opportunities to use English.’

As for the atmosphere in class, she claimed,

‘When the students learn without stress, their skills will be developed to some extent although they don’t achieve high marks.’

**Passorn** planned deliberately for her teaching. Her available collection of resources for students, her scheme of developing the students’ content knowledge, and the sacrifice of her lunch time for a small group tutorial constituted her teaching preparation. This is evidence of her attempt to get closer to the students’ learning.

**Passorn** also believed that teaching approaches vary according to the context, content and the levels of the students. She tried to make the students ‘generate the knowledge’ from their learning, inside and outside the classroom. She emphasises,

‘Knowledge does not come from the teachers only. Students also generate knowledge from their problems.’

## **Silk**

The information concerning teachers’ beliefs from **Silk** can be categorised into two areas: the students, and the teacher’s role. He described his beliefs in the following details.



### **The students as a vital part of teaching**

Silk viewed the students as vital in his teaching. They impacted on the teaching process. The students' motivation to learn was the most important factor. Their lack of responsibility in learning and their low motivation to learn could not make his teaching flow. This was shown in their unwillingness to do assignments and, further, in their reluctance to find experience on tour guiding on their own. Silk pointed out three reasons for this circumstance.

First, several students' attitude towards the tour guide career changed after the first field trip because they found that it was a demanding job consuming both time and energy. Second, the students' financial condition made the arrangement of the field trip experience difficult. Several could hardly afford to join the arranged tour, or any tour, at their own expense. Third, the students who studied his course were mostly second-year students. Their English competence was not high enough to study English for tourism, which demanded a high-intermediate level of English competence.

**Silk** described his expectation in an allusion from Buddhism. He said,

‘If only two or three students can understand what is taught in the classroom, or show that they are eager to learn, I’m satisfied. It is like when the monk gives a sermon to about a hundred people. If only two gain insight in the Dhamma, that should be enough.’

However, as a teacher he still wanted to reach more students and wanted them to learn what the tourist guide should know. Independent ways of learning were expected and promoted. He expressed that, ‘Deep interest and practicum make effective learners.’

### ***The teacher's role***

**Silk's** beliefs about teaching lie in the role he took in the classroom, and his perception of an effective approach to teaching English for tourism. He

simulated a trip in the classroom, and took a dual role of teacher and tour guide. He taught English usage and reading comprehension skills. He provided tour guide strategies and tips of being good guides. He organised activities so as to facilitate the students to practise using English and to role-play being tour guides. He tried to create a balance between the skills in English for tourism, and the strategies of tour guiding.

### **5.3.7 *Classroom practice***

Under this theme the lecturers' teaching actions, perceptions and expectations of students are described, followed by the students' views of the teachers' classroom practice, and their perception and expectation of teachers. Teachers' and students' views presented show congruence and discrepancies between teaching and learning in the classroom, and the important role of the students' context.

#### **Nanta's classroom practice**

Nanta taught reading and literature courses, including poetry, prose, and critical reading. There were approximately fifteen weeks in a semester. The class meeting was scheduled once a week, and covered one hour and forty minutes to two and a half hours. When she planned the course outline, she followed the objectives given in the curriculum. Then she prepared the content and selected materials. The student context and experience were used as criteria for selecting materials. However she followed one of her beliefs, that being making use of literary texts in the original version of English. This was a very important aspect she wanted to emphasise. She believed that

'If the students can cope with original vocabulary, if they can understand seventy-five per cent of the text, it can be considered successful. Then they will be able to read other reading materials in their daily life. If they read only simplified materials, they won't be able to read authentic texts.'

She applied an assessment method called the 'continuous assessment method'. By this, she meant giving a quiz at the end of each unit, and assignments were marked and included as accumulative points. There was no mid-term test. Only the final was considered a 'big event'. Her handouts were well-structured, started with clear objectives and directions, followed by the background information of the period, the text, and finally the follow-up comprehension questions. These handouts were distributed to the students in advance for their preparation before class.

Her teaching was predominantly giving explanations on a text, or clarifying some thoughts of the literary periods concerned. The medium of instruction was predominantly English. She gave the knowledge concerning the contextual background of a literary work. When dealing with the work, she pointed out the significant characteristics of the style, for instance how the poet employs particular words in a description of a character's appearance to create humour. The lesson proceeded with explanation and, alternatively, leading questions to check the students' comprehension. Simultaneously, she dealt with difficult vocabulary in the text by checking the meaning with the students, and later supplied definitions. She clarified literary devices as well. When students gave incorrect answers, or when silence occurred, she provided them with more information, or explanation. She tried to encourage the students to discuss and interpret the texts. Some incidents in the text were brought up from time to time to relate to current events in order that the students could see that literature is not inaccessible. She explained, 'It's about life. What happened a long time ago can be seen nowadays'.

Frequently, she used pauses in order to allow students' questions. Normally, there was silence. She got the students involved by asking them to read the poem out loud and, once, provided an experience of listening to the reading of Coleridge's 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner'. At the end of each unit there were comprehension questions of a subjective type. She requested the students to answer them as group work in preparation for a discussion in the following session. She expected the students to be able to find the answers for the

discussion. When she was certain that the students understood that unit, a quiz would be given in the following session.

In her quizzes, she used objective types of questions. Her reason of selecting that type was ‘to check their comprehension of the text in general’. As for the final test, she usually included unseen pieces as she wanted the students to apply the knowledge and strategies learned from the class.

Apart from the quizzes and the final examination that required the students to work individually, **Nanta** usually gave out homework to be done in pairs or groups. She said she wanted to create ‘peer help’ as part of independent learning. Individual works were also given to the students toward the middle of the semester. Students were asked to present their views as response to English poems, or songs. Each student needed to give a short analysis of the tone of the poem or song chosen, and describe his/her feeling about it. This activity was an encouragement of creativity and independent learning.

In the critical reading class, authentic materials, such as tourist brochures, selections from magazine and newspaper articles concerning facts, opinions, and moral issues were used. She familiarised the students with authentic texts so that they would be able to read English texts in general. **Nanta** viewed that reading the text in the original English was a means to improve the students’ English competence, which could benefit them in order to read other texts in authentic English. She further believed that when the students were ‘conscious of English’, they could ‘connect their ideas with the language’, and ‘they would be able to think and write more.’

As in other courses, **Nanta**’s syllabus followed the objectives stated in the curriculum. She made certain that the students knew the content of the course as required in the curriculum. The lesson proceeded with explanation and leading questions. Time in class was allocated for a group assignment so that cooperative learning would be promoted. The atmosphere in her classes was pleasant, and ‘conducive’ to learning. She pointed out that

‘Students should be encouraged to read. If they are stressed, they will be bored with reading. I want to make them learn with relaxation so that they would like to read more. Continuous assessment will make them feel less stressed. They will not have to prepare for the test that covers everything.’

By explaining in English most of the time in class, by having the students read the texts in the original version with her help in class, and by assigning them to work on their own, **Nanta** expected that the students could connect their literature reading experience with their life.

*Nanta viewed professional development experience as holistic, and teaching experience as a dynamic source of teaching knowledge. She states,*

‘The ‘know how’ for literature classes accumulates from the long experience of teaching which has been adjusted to each group of students. Experience makes me know how they are and at what level from the first class meeting.’

Experience enabled her to become spontaneous to every aspect of the teaching context inside and outside the classroom. Being compatible with the knowledge gained from professional development courses, it aided her in selecting texts appropriate to the students’ level. It made her capable of simplifying the difficult content for the students, and allows them to form some principles of critical reading. It made her realise the importance of the student context. Experience deriving from teaching the courses of a similar nature many times seemed to be a stable source of knowledge and development for **Nanta**. She gained ‘deep understanding’ from teaching. She also stated:

‘Teaching many times has made me know how to make students understand the texts. New situations and new contexts generate professional development. Teaching many classes of the same course creates insights into the texts.’

Experience from teaching was acquired from interplay between contexts and repetition of the teaching action. She viewed classrooms as a ‘database’ for teaching and improving the content and methods. More importantly, classrooms provide teaching experience which can be accumulated and developed for the

benefit of students' learning. On the contrary, lacking experience is detrimental, as she stated, 'Being inexperienced hinders good teaching'.

### **Nanta's perceptions of the students**

**Nanta** saw the students as a group rather than individually. Her perception was concerned with

1. The relationship between the students' previous knowledge and the students' performance;
2. the nature of the Thai students, and Rajabhat students;
3. the English teacher education curriculum; and
4. her expectation of the students.

### **The relationship between the students' previous knowledge and the students' performance**

She perceived that students who were good at learning were also good at thinking. Their English proficiency was high and showed better performance on tests. This was because they had a strong English background developed from their schools. They had less difficulty in studying. A good English background became a steppingstone for them to study in courses on a higher level. They showed motivation to learn, participate in the activities, and take responsibility in learning. They needed guidance, but less enforcement. Whereas the students with a shattered English background did vice versa, and needed to be motivated and enforced.

### **The nature of the Thai students, and Rajabhat students**

**Nanta** accepted that the learner-centred approach is useful in involving the students to learn - to know themselves in learning. However, she viewed that the approach would be effective if the Thai students had been trained to learn with it in every level of their education. They would be more critical and would

contribute more in their learning. She observed that ‘they do not like to give their opinions’.

She expressed her opinion of Rajabhat students that most of them, especially those in Bangkok, did not like to study at Rajabhat institutes. Their aim was the universities. Rajabhat students are not as eager to learn as university students. In her experience students in regional Rajabhats were enthusiastic to learn because ‘they feel that studying is meaningful to them’. In her reading class, her students had a low level of competence, lacked motivation to read and respond in class because they were not prepared. They did not read on their own, but expected to read together with the teacher in class. Autonomous or independent learning never worked with the students.

### **The English teacher education curriculum**

As for the students in the English Education programme, they had to study English as well as the other education courses. Since there was more emphasis on education courses, the students’ English competence was not adequately developed.

#### **Her expectation of students**

**Nanta** expected that, when reading, the students should be able to know about the format of each genre and the purpose of writing. They should be able to read critically and apply reading principles to analyse reading texts. She wanted the students to be independent learners.

In teaching poetry, she tried to make students see that it is an art, and it is related to life. If the students could see the value of literature, she took this as achievement.

‘When reading poetry, students would experience pleasure and would be able to apply the knowledge gained in their real life. If they could connect what they had learned with real life, I took this as successful. When the students saw that poetry was useful, I also counted on this as successful.’

In response to her expectation, she tried to make this attainable by supporting them. Her support was the well-structured handouts and continuous assessment. In her opinion, this would relieve the students’ feeling that they had too much burden to cope with.

### **The students’ perspectives of Nanta and her classroom practice**

The students in Nanta’s literature class specified their problems concerning their learning. Their problems were concerned with the teaching style, their own linguistic difficulties, their intimidation arising from a lack of confidence in giving the right answers to the teacher, and their need for more guidance from the teacher.

‘We could not follow lectures, nor we could take notes. We dare not give answers because it is difficult to arrange words into sentences. We had no confidence when studying on our own. We need the teachers’ help.’

The students in the same class expressed their contradictory opinions about group work for the purpose of peer assistance that ‘peer help didn’t work because nobody could guide any one’. They felt that dividing work among members in groups was not fair because some did a lot more work than others.

They felt that studying this course was like ‘battling with it’. They had to work hard and helped themselves a lot. They felt stressed because ‘the teacher was very competent and enthusiastic’. They also stated,

‘[The teacher] is a typical teacher, a model teacher, is not close to us like other teachers, not relaxed, but very academic, and formal.’



They needed the teacher

‘to pay attention to all students, to approach and check if we understood or not. We dared not tell the teacher when we do not understand. We feel that in the teacher’s eyes, we should be mature students.’

One of the students pointed out that their understanding was important because ‘it affects the evaluation’.

Some students noted that the teacher was unaware that there were students who were left behind in class, due to the lecture and explanation being in English. They presented their opinion below.

‘The teacher speaks English all the time. We don’t understand. Some totally don’t even though the teacher tries to speak slowly. If we don’t understand what the teacher teaches, we cannot work on the assignment.’

### **The students’ views of the teacher and the knowledge acquired from the class**

The students claimed that they were able to understand the basic aspects of knowledge in the course they studied. The knowledge they gained had been transmitted from the teachers and from working on the assignments. They realised that the background knowledge was important for further analytical thinking. Others found that listening to English lectures was a good way to get familiar with the language.

The students accepted that the teacher’s being ‘very capable’ and ‘well-prepared’ in both the content and the teaching plan contributed to their learning. They described what they gained as follows:

‘We get new vocabulary. We know about the deep meaning and implied meaning. We learn about themes, ideas, the poet’s intention, the wonder of poetry, appreciation of the poetic language, and aesthetics.’

Some students could see the applicability of the knowledge from the class. They claimed that skills and socio-cultural knowledge gained could be used when reading novels, or novels in translated versions.

### **The students' expectation**

The students' expectation in **Nanta**'s literature class focused on the help from the teacher, a change in the teacher's teaching style, and a right in selecting texts. They expressed this view,

‘Compatibility, or understanding between teachers and students is the first priority for successful learning. The second is the teaching method.’

They needed some help in these areas: samples of interpretations of texts, and more recordings of literary reading. More explanation on the text in class was included as a change in the teaching style. They gave suggestions, such as more opportunities to read literary texts aloud in class for more understanding and enjoyment, and individual assignments.

### **Passorn's classroom practice**

Passorn's classroom practice can be categorised into these areas: teaching plans, a balance between discipline and a relaxing atmosphere, the communicative teaching process, and the teaching process of the methodology class.

### **Teaching plans**

**Passorn** identified her typical teaching plan for most classes as follows:

1. setting up objectives;
2. identifying the language content, namely language functions, vocabulary, phonology, syntax and grammar of each unit;

3. selecting materials according to the objectives;
4. considering the appropriate levels of the content; and
5. managing an appropriate proportion of time for students' independent learning.

These steps are used as guiding principles for her teaching.

### **A balance between discipline and a relaxing atmosphere**

When teaching, she tried to create a relaxing atmosphere. She appeared to be very pleasant in class. She encouraged the students to give responses, using words of praises such as 'very good', 'well done', and 'excellent'. However, this does not mean that she conducted her class in an easy-going manner. In fact, her classes were clearly structured with an enactment of a deliberate teaching process towards a specific goal and the content of each unit. English was used as a medium of instruction almost all of the time. Translation was allowed when encountering abstract words.

She also set some class regulations as a support for students' learning. Class attendance checking, punctuality of class attendance, and punctuality of assignment submission were informed to the students in the first class period. These regulations must be followed strictly, but she showed care in relation to her students. For example, students who were absent from class three times would be called in to talk with her. This allowed her to be aware of any problems and made her better able to help them with practical solutions.

### **The communicative teaching process**

In the English for communication classes, **Passorn's** teaching process was divided into three steps, which 'could be overlapping with each other'. She utilised the three P's. In the presentation stage, the new language item, or function, was introduced, such as describing locations, and ordering a meal. She usually added the preparation stage to the presentation stage so as 'to make sure that the students could easily join the activities in the practice stage'. She was

very cautious in the preparation stage. She could anticipate what language problems the students were going to face. Therefore 'adequate preparation was a must'. She explained what she usually did in her class.

'I have to predict what sort of problems are going to happen. I will make them practise that language item before doing the task. It's a preventive action. When the students made mistakes, or couldn't do the task properly, I will take them back to the preparation stage *again*.'

In the practice stage, pair work was usually arranged for the whole class of fifty or sixty. The students took roles in speaking the assigned dialogue. **Passorn** walked around the class to check their involvement as well as their problems. When she heard some mispronunciation of particular words, she would have the students practise saying those words. Walking around to listen to students was a way to informally enforce the student's participation in the activity. In assigning pair work, she believed that having students work together was an act of encouragement for building confidence. As a follow-up, she asked for volunteers to write some expressions that they had learned on the board. She did this because she 'wanted the students to see that their contributions were important and useful'.

The production stage was usually assigned as oral tests. Working in pairs, students had to write a dialogue, using the same situation as a model dialogue. Then they presented that dialogue to **Passorn**. This pair work was taken as an oral test which took place within the class session, or during her lunch break. She listened attentively to the students and wrote down the mistakes they made. When the presentation was over, she made some comments, and pointed out mistakes, asking the students to correct them, and telling them their final marks.

### **The teaching process of the methodology class**

In **Passorn**'s methodology of teaching English class, she integrated both the content and the strategies of teaching English. The content includes the text selections in the secondary school course books. The students had to

comprehend the content and were able to select the language items. To ensure that the students genuinely knew the content, she set up what she called ‘quality assurance’ for the English education students, in that they had to review the content of all textbooks used at elementary and secondary levels. Then they had to pass the ‘proficiency test’ which included checking reading comprehension and skills in forming questions. **Passorn** set up a requirement that the students had to do all items correctly. If not, they had to take the test repetitively until they got it all correct.

The content of the methodology class comprised

1. English knowledge and skills relevant to teaching, such as morphology, phonology, syntax and function;
2. issues in methodology;
3. supervision policy;
4. emphasis on clear steps of teaching; and
5. advice on efficient and ethical teaching behaviours.

The class was conducted with an emphasis on a learning-by-doing process. First, the students took a test on reading comprehension and writing skills. Second, the students studied from reference sources on traditional approaches and current approaches in teaching English and presented them in groups to the class. Third, **Passorn** demonstrated the teaching of a lesson, following the three Ps process, and without a preceding explanation of the approach. The students observed and drew a conclusion on the process. Fourth, the students were assigned to present their teaching in groups, as practice. Before each presentation, the students had to be involved in preparation under **Passorn**’s close supervision. They worked on how to write lesson plans for teaching the four skills communicatively, how to select materials, teaching aids, and exercises for each lesson. This was followed by the teaching presentations. After each presentation, students who observed were encouraged to freely give comments on their friends’ teaching. **Passorn** would give her comments at the conclusion. Fifth, individual teaching practice was assigned. Again, the

preparation was under **Passorn**'s close guidance. Sixth, the usage of classroom expressions became a focus as **Passorn** wanted to create a context for communication in English, as well as to encourage the student teachers to use English while teaching. She further explained what happened during supervision or guidance.

'Mostly the students have a problem with writing lesson plans. They complain that they're very difficult. I will point out what skill they want to emphasise, and review the steps of teaching. If they find that the materials are too difficult, I'll show them the materials I've collected, and they can change them. If they need some teaching aids, I can lend them some.'

It was obvious that **Passorn** used various activities to teach in class. She placed importance on students' involvement. She was careful to give equal chances to students for their responses and comments. In this class, she generated the students' teaching confidence through teaching practice, and arranged an encouraging environment in which the students could learn to improve their teaching from their peers, not only from the teacher.

### **Passorn's perception of the students**

She perceived that students' learning was shaped by the traditional way of teaching and learning. She expressed the view that the difficulty she encountered in her classrooms was that it was very hard to change the students' learning strategies. They had been taught in a traditional way for a long time. The spoon-feeding approach had been implanted in them and they were unfamiliar with her teaching approach. It would take a much longer time to change it. Also, in her classes, the students were of different skill levels. Some had almost no background of English, whereas others were English majors. This was a result of the Institute policy of offering students to enrol in the English foundation class if they wished.

**Passorn** did not specify her expectation. She stated briefly, 'If the students could get about 60% from the classroom, I would be satisfied'. Sixty percent

did not seem high, but she expected that the students would be able to use the communicative strategies in their job interviews. As for the students in the English teacher education programme, they should be able to grasp the three P's process and use it in their practicum.

**Passorn** also believed that teaching approaches vary to the context, content and the levels of the students. She tried to make the students 'generate the knowledge' from their learning, inside and outside the classroom. She emphasises,

'Knowledge does not come from the teachers only. Students also generate knowledge from their problems.'

### **The students' perspectives of Passorn and her classroom practice**

In the teaching methodology class, the students saw the clear steps of teaching from the teaching demonstration, comments, and close guidance of preparation for teaching practice in class. Apart from that they expressed what they could observe from her classroom practice, which could be divided into teaching behaviours, professional ideals, and role models.

The students in this class noted that what they gained from the class was not only the knowledge of teaching methodology, but also 'learning' about the teaching professional ideal. They described that,

'She is conscientious and kind. She understands the students' needs, and their situations. She uses understandable English. She understands what vocabulary the students do not know by observing the students' expressions. She explains a lot to make the students understand. She shows her concerns for the students. She is understanding and tolerant towards the students. She is approachable and resourceful. She practises the teacher ideal which is manifested in her actions. She integrates the moral aspects into her teaching. We see that some disciplines are enforced in class, such as attendance checking, punctuality in attending classes and submitting assignments. This can enhance our learning.'

The students in the English for communication class felt confident to interact with peers in English in class. In class, the students felt confident to interact with peers in English. They felt that their listening skills in general, as well as specific listening skills, were improved.

‘About 70-80 % of our listening skills have been improved. Our skills in guessing the meaning from context clues when listening have been improved. We feel that we get enough practice in using English.’

In the methodology of teaching class, the students were able to perceive that the teacher had an ‘in-depth understanding’ of the content. She guided them very clearly in teaching, analysing the curriculum, and how to learn. They could also observe the teacher’s humanistic way of teaching.

‘She is very democratic in her guidance and comments. She is thorough in covering aspects of teaching when making fruitful comments. She has never used bad words in giving comments, but gives encouragement, and makes us feel that we are capable. She has never made us feel inferior, or shown insults in her comments.’

The teacher’s teaching technique affected the students’ learning. The task-based approach, which was rarely applied by other teachers, promoted the students’ involvement in learning. The students found that she emphasised the practical aspects of knowledge. They felt that they learned from their participation in generating knowledge with peers. They pointed out

‘We can say that 20% of knowledge is from the teacher, and 80% is student-generated, from peer comments, teaching demonstrations and practice.’

Personality aspects of the teacher were observed by the students. They stated that they also learned from observing her personality and behaviours in the classroom.

‘We observe how she dresses, her manners towards the students, and her attitude



towards teaching. We gain knowledge, absorb the teacher ideal and feel her love for teaching. We feel that we are lucky to study with her.'

She encouraged the students to practise English outside the classroom. Some students made contact with foreigners with enthusiasm to have some experience of communicating in English in a real context.

'I've got a foreign friend, and we contact each other through e-mails.'

'I like going to Khao Sarn Road (a tourist spot in Bangkok) and give help to some tourists. Sometimes I explain things to them. Once I gave a tourist some money because he was broke. I communicate with foreigners in my part-time job. I sing in a restaurant, and the foreigners request for songs.'

### **Silk's classroom practice**

Silk's classroom practice falls into two categories: teaching plans and the methodology of teaching tourism.

#### **Teaching plans**

When planning the course, he took the duties of the guide as the main objective. Then he decided the language used should be appropriate to the student's level. The content was mainly of

- the historical, geographical and cultural aspects of Thailand
- information about important tourist attractions
- the process of conducting tours
- tour planning
- tips for good guides
- the tour guide language.

Unlike other teachers of English for tourism, he combined the English content used in describing places with strategies of conducting tours. He structured

activities to make the students use English expressions to describe places. He integrated essential strategies for being a tour guide in the lessons. His justification for the change is shown below.

‘I have combined the content of the two courses: Tourist Guide and English for Tourism. I don’t want the students to memorise as parrots. They should know what the guides usually do when they conduct tours, not just the information about the places. I’m glad that I didn’t make a wrong decision because one student who is working in a tour business came to see me one day. He thanked me for teaching him about what he could really use in his job.’

### **The teaching process of tour guiding and English for tourism**

As a basis for encouraging students to develop their English for tour guiding, and to avoid mimicking the information from the text, he taught them to create key sentences. Early in the course, he taught them basic sentence patterns, and the simple tenses of present and past which are frequently used in the tour guide language. He expected that they should be able to describe tourist attractions in their own words.

When reading information about tourist attractions, he taught them to extract key ideas by using question words to form questions. Then he assigned each student to write a route from their places to the Institute. Important places along the route had to be identified. The students presented their works by describing what places were along the routes and give information about them. At this point, Silk inserted strategies of a good tour guide by suggesting they add bits of interesting information about the places. For example, when describing a war monument, not only its history should be mentioned. Such information as the number of military men and civilians involved in the events should be mentioned in order to make the information more interesting.

Also, the guide had to be aware of the right direction, be it her right, or the tourists’ right, as s/he was on the coach bus. When telling of Thai food, if s/he

could personalise the description by relating it to her/his experience, that would be interesting for the tourists. He also pointed out the criteria for evaluating the students' presentations, which comprised

- loudness;
- eye-contact;
- confidence;
- points of interest.

The first presentation was counted as practice. Later presentations would be marked. In giving feedback to the students, it could be observed that he avoided giving them strong comments. This was because he did not want his students to lose confidence.

Subsequently, he asked the students to choose an interesting place in their hometown, write the route to it, and describe interesting places along the route. He simulated the classroom as a coach bus with tourists and the student presenter was the guide. He occasionally referred to his experience of the previous tours to share examples of strategies with the students.

Following this, a long field trip was organised for the students to experience the real attractions, learning about the information of those places, and observing the professional guides at work. Useful strategies were given to the students at every stage of the trip planning and arrangement. He told the students about the reasons for going by train instead of by coach or bus.

'The trip by train was meant to teach the students that when arranging a tour, safety should come first. The road to Chiangmai was likely to cause accidents due to many sharp curves. The other reason is that the driver may be tired by the long hours of driving. He may fall asleep any minute when travelling at night.'

As tips to remember the gist of the description of the place, he asked them to keep key sentences of each place as 'golden sentences'. He showed videos of

important temples in Bangkok as listening practice. He suggested the students collect brochures as sources of knowledge for guiding tours.

Grammar was not focussed, but if some grammatical problems could be detected, they would be dealt with. He was once told by a colleague that the group of students who were going to study with him in the following semester had genuine grammatical problems. At the beginning of the next semester, he dealt with the problems.

In his course on English for tourism, the students were required to use a book. It was used as a source of information on the 76 provinces of Thailand. The book is comprehensive on not only information on tourist attractions, but it also covers geographical, historical and cultural aspects of every province. Each unit contains information of the province, followed by exercises to develop the learners' skills in vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, and writing. The content of each unit is dense with information and specific vocabulary.

**Silk** did not take this text as a course book to be used in class. He required his students to prepare for each unit before class by looking up difficult words in the dictionary. Much outside reading involvement was used. When assigned to plan or conduct tours, the book should be a good reference for the students.

### **The students' perspectives of Silk and his teaching**

In the English for tourism class, linguistic difficulties discouraged students from getting information for the assignment. Therefore, they were unprepared for class. They complained,

'The text was difficult with lots of details. It was very dense with information. In class we appeared lacking enthusiasm to learn because we found that the vocabulary was difficult.'

The feeling of intimidation also occurred in this class. Despite the view that practising in class made the students gain more confidence, some were still

unconfident because they were afraid that their friends would not understand them when they presented their work.

The students indicated one important point that could explain their lack of enthusiasm in learning. They saw no direct applicability of this particular knowledge to their life. Most expressed similar views,

‘We are not ready to decide yet about our career. We are not so interested to take that career.’

Also, they needed the teachers to help them with the linguistic problems. They were also interested in knowledge on behavioural aspects, such as the tour guide’s interactions with the tourists.

In a class on tourism, they found that the practice of conducting an actual tour was useful, but they needed the teacher’s explanation on some specific information. The students showed concern on the atmosphere of the class. They expected some regulations in class to be enforced, and clearer directions in order to create effective learning. They said,

‘The teacher should be more strict, more active and lively. We want a clearer explanation on the assignment and evaluation criteria.’

Expectations emerging from an awareness of the students’ role as learners were encouraging to the teachers. The teacher’s role as a provider of knowledge was still prominent, but the students contributed knowledge as well.

‘We expect to have 60% of knowledge from the teacher, and 40% our own. Guidance from the teacher is still necessary. We want to be able to communicate. We really don’t want high grades. They are not that important.’

The students’ views of **Silk** in terms of his knowledge, competence, and personality were very positive. They had no doubt about his knowledge and abilities. They admired him and his competence. In the tourism classes, they regarded the teacher as resourceful.

The other group of students enrolling in English for Tourism in the following semester agreed that **Silk** was knowledgeable and resourceful on the content of tourism classes and tour guide strategies. The students recognised his abilities.

‘He knows every bit of information about the places all over Thailand. He has experienced all those places by himself. It was fun to listen to him talking about stories that are not in the book. We are sure that he is capable. He really knows a lot.’

His being resourceful had an impact on the students. In the second tourism class, the students attempted to search for more knowledge about tourist sites by accessing the information on the internet, because they also wanted to become resourceful. They did not have any trouble reading electronic texts in English because they had enough background information from the class. They enjoyed going to the tourist attractions to watch professional guides on their own, although they were not certain about their decisions on their career path.

Other students indicated that the teachers’ experience and the field trips stimulated their interest. They enjoyed his fund of stories about his experiences visiting many tourist attractions. Seeing the real places could stimulate their memories about words and expressions learned in class. Group presentations in class made them become more confident.

#### ***5.3.8 Students’ goals and learning strategies***

The students’ learning strategies were similar, particularly being attentive to what the teacher taught and being well-prepared for examinations. The students who studied literature and reading had conflicting opinions about their goals and learning strategies. Those in the first group did not worry about their marks from examinations. In class they tried to understand what the teacher explained. Outside class, they read other materials they were interested in. They gave their opinions as follows:

‘I study with enjoyment. I’m attentive in class. I do assignments as ordered and keep up with what has been assigned. I study hard only for the tests. I study lecture notes, and I’m very careful in taking notes. I try to manage time effectively. I want to do other things besides studying. I want to do well in other things. I study only what has been taught in class. I tried to understand what is taught in class in that particular session. I ask the teacher about what I don’t understand. I love reading. I read anything except texts. I read other types of media to relate to themes in texts to widen my experience about life. Preparing for a test is not a serious matter. I make a guess about what should be in the test.’

The opinions of the second group manifested overlapping themes of goals and expectations from the course. The students in this group tried to relate their study of literature to life. They wanted to have ‘knowledge about life to get a realisation that life is real, not a dream’.

The students in the third group based their goals on learning in class. They wanted to improve their English language skills, and be able to apply the knowledge learned in class. They wanted to improve their language proficiency so that they could use English in their daily life, such as translation. They wanted to apply the reading techniques outside the classroom.

Some simply students wanted to survive the course. Others motivated themselves to learn and use English outside the classroom setting. The students’ learning strategies depend on their perceptions of how the knowledge of English can be applied in their future career. When they are certain about their future careers, they have high levels of motivation.

### ***5.3.9 The classroom as a professional development base***

**Passorn** explicitly stated that her classroom provides learning and experience to her throughout her career. She perceived her classroom as a laboratory for improving teaching, and experimenting with techniques. It facilitated her ‘continuous improvement of teaching aids and materials’. Within her classroom, she critically reflected on what hindered the students’ learning. She learned about the students’ problems and made some changes on particular

aspects of her teaching. Learning from the classroom could occur when she taught the same course with different groups of students, or the same course in the following semester. She pointed this out:

‘When I teach English for Communication to two groups of students on the same day, I can see that the group in the afternoon will get my better teaching. I tend to look back at what I haven’t done right in the morning class, and adjust something in the afternoon class.’

Repetitive teaching of different classes on the same course made improvements in her teaching. Modification of teaching can be a consequence of intentional reflection on the previous teaching activity, or it can be a result of an accidental incidents as illustrated:

‘Once I got out of a class, and came back to my office, I found an article which was left unread in front of me. It dawned on me that this could be a terrific text for the students of the class I had taught, and I thought I should have included it in the last session. Sometimes I looked through my collections of teaching aids, and found that I could have included some good ones in my teaching.’

In her class, when she felt that some things were missing, they could be filled in the next class as long as she continued thinking about her teaching. It appeared that **Passorn** practised critical reflection, although it cannot be said that she did it regularly and systematically. For her, reflective practice on her methods and behaviours in class constituted a more careful teaching preparation. She believed that professional development could begin with the teachers’ intention and commitment to improve teaching preparation.

‘I think this is very important. Intention and commitment to improve teaching preparation which leads to students’ better learning outcome can be called professional development.’

Her key words supported this belief: ‘Planning makes effective teaching’. When asked if any changes occurred while teaching, she pointed out that adjustments occurred in the teaching process as corrective action. For example, when students had problems with listening comprehension whilst doing an exercise, she would bring them back to the preparation stage again to review



strategies for listening comprehension and generate confidence for doing the exercise at the next stage. In her case, changes usually occurred in the use of teaching aids, and resulted in an adjustment of the teaching process to suit the content of the course.

In her view concerning classroom practice and professional development, **Passorn** pointed out that professional development could be considered effective ‘when the teacher’s knowledge and skills obtained were to be applied with the students in the classroom’.

### **Silk**

**Silk** organised his classroom to achieve his two goals: to prepare the students to be tour guides, and to enable them to conduct a tour in English. He integrated these two domains of knowledge through various activities in his classes. He emphasised the practical aspects of the course. An obligatory field trip was arranged in at least one semester. Other trips were optional for the students.

He did not express the view that the classroom was a base for his professional development explicitly. He seemed to rely more on knowledge and experiences accumulated from real situations than that obtained from classrooms. The teaching plan, goal, and process of the English for Tourism course were already set. He could predict what would probably not happen according to the plan. He prepared an alternative plan for each activity. At one point he described this process to the researcher before class.

‘I assigned each student to describe the route from her/his place to the Institute. In class, I will ask them to volunteer. If the students don’t volunteer, I will demonstrate more. I look at their involuntariness as lacking confidence or understanding of the process or content.’

Changes in his teaching were made to enhance students’ learning and the practicality of the situations. Although he did not place a very high extent of importance on the classroom as a professional development base, he reflected

upon previous classes and made some changes in teaching activities. For example, when he found that many problems arose due to a required trip to another province, he changed the destination of the following trip to tourist attractions in Bangkok.

In the subsequent semester, instead of having the students design a route to a selected tourist attraction and relate information on the places along the route as in the previous class, he gave copies of important routes to the students, had them prepare information from the circulated handout, and describe places along the routes in class. The change arose from his observation that the students did not have enough information to describe those places. By doing this, students gave more responses.

A change in teaching plans usually occurred as a result of what he perceived had not worked in the previous semester. Once he required the students to go to a museum by themselves. There, the students were to be informed by a local guide. He did not accompany them there because he had already made contact with the authorities at the museum. In the following week, he found that only a few students showed up. Therefore, in the next semester he accompanied them to every required tour.

The classroom also made him learn to be flexible, and that not every class could be arranged the same way. Students' involvement also depends on many factors. At one point he was an advisor to a group that he also taught English for tourism. He found that the course was immensely successful because of the intimate relationship between him and those students. They went on many field trips together. What he could observe was that the students gained a lot of confidence. They had strong unity among themselves and showed strong leadership. After graduation, they went to work in business sectors and became successful. He noted that having the role of advisor had an impact on the students' learning because the close relationship between the teacher and students enhanced their learning. He claimed:

‘I think my role as advisor contributed a great deal to the students’ learning. We could get along very well. They seemed to see my points in arranging tours for them. They didn’t complain about money. They enjoyed the trips and saw that going on those trips was a valuable experience.’

#### **5.3.10 Work environment**

Of the three participants, **Nanta** was the most affected by her work environment. Political problems, factions, and the perceived unfair bureaucratic system were part of her work experience. Aside from being affected by the injustice of the bureaucratic system, she felt that she was treated unfairly by some administrators who managed with favouritism. Once, all her devotion and hard work was neglected, and a reward that should have been made to her for her contribution was given to a favourite of the administrators instead. She confided,

‘There was preparation for the opening of the French for Business programme. I had quite adequate background of French, and my competence could be developed. I was nominated to be a member in the committee to draft the curriculum. When the curriculum had been approved, the Supervisory Unit in cooperation with the French cultural centre, launched a project to develop the knowledge and skills of the teachers who were going to teach French. I was nominated as one of the candidates. We had to take an oral and written exam. I got the highest marks. The final decision was made by the top management. They selected their favourite whose French competence didn’t reach the passing criteria. I was very upset with that unfairness. Repaying to the favourites seems to be the ruling system.’

**Nanta** was Chair of the programme, the position she felt that she ‘had to fulfill’ or ‘had to do’ when she was nominated. The practice that required the lecturers to work on extra duties, aside from teaching, affected her management. A group of lecturers who took up the management of the language centre usually refused to take an equal amount of teaching loads as other members because they had extra work. She seemed to reach a resolution for life by the adoption of a Buddhist attitude. It calms her down and makes her accept things as they are. This is her belief about life.

‘One cannot get everything one wants. It is impossible for anyone to get everything one wants.’

### ***Passorn***

*She seemed to have a fortunate working life. She was well-liked by her colleagues and her superiors who recognised her capability and her hard work. There were factions in her programme, but she belonged to the group who felt that understanding is the key mechanism.*

*We are as a working team, and our work has been recognised by the Institute. They always request us for help in school work.’*

She tried to avoid conflict with colleagues. She usually received support from her superiors. This was evident when the administrators granted her financial support as a special case. In general, universities will not provide financial support to a staff member aged over fifty because s/he is close to retirement. The gains the university will get after her/his study are always the first criterion because of her/his short return period of service upon return. It was fortunate for **Passorn** that she got the grant.

### ***Silk***

A serious opposing circumstance was very obvious at **Silk**’s workplace. Offices of the two English programmes were distinctively separated rooms. Staff members of the two programmes rarely or never visited each other as they managed the programmes independently. However, **Silk** did not take this circumstance as personal. He was not affected by the factions between the staff of the two programmes. He said he could get along with any sides of the adversaries ‘although they acted like they could have killed each other sometimes’. His attitude towards life has remained positive since he was very young. Such a hostile atmosphere in his academic institution had no impact on his firm optimism.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the key themes that emerged from the data analyses are presented

1. the biography is pertinent to her/his career and professional development: how some personal anecdotes represent significant influences on her/his learning, career decision, and vision of professional ideal leading to professional development;
2. the professional development process: the long, continual process of learning, the underlying factors contributing to the engagement, and the impact of professional development on the participants;
3. the classroom practice: being the conglomeration of the participants' knowledge and experiences, manifesting the teacher's beliefs, values, personal perspectives, and consequences of the integration of knowledge gained from professional development into the classrooms;
4. the connection and gap between professional learning and classroom practice: is the effectiveness of the integration of practical knowledge into the classroom; and what factors constitute its effectiveness.

It can be seen from the findings that the teachers' personal dimensions are inseparable from their professional lives and, thus, their professional development. In this close connection, the strong individualities of the teachers and their self-awareness of the professional ideal are evident. Another connection can also be seen in their integration of the developed knowledge into their practical knowledge, and consequently into the classrooms. The last connection, which may not be complete, is between the application of the practical knowledge and the students' learning.

The classroom practice mirrors the teachers' beliefs, and personal dispositions. They seem to verify each other. However, the classroom practice may not shed light on the other crucial aspect of the classroom, namely students' learning. This explains why the students' views are needed. The students' voices provide

an implication of how professional development can connect to the students' learning.

In the next chapter, the discussion of the findings is presented. The discussion deals with the interpretation of the findings, and how they are conceptualised in relation to the key issues concerning teachers' professional learning in the research questions.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the interpretation of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The central themes selected from the findings will be analysed and discussed in order to discover the meaningful answers to the research questions, which are reiterated as follows:

1. How do the Rajabhat EFL lecturers in Rajabhats acquire and develop their professional knowledge and skills?
2. How do they integrate the acquired knowledge and skills into their practice?
3. What, if any, is the impact of professional development on their classroom practice?

The discussion aims to develop robust theoretical explanations for the crucial themes from the findings. Three aspects are included, namely

- the interplay of the three crucial elements of professional development, the context of practice, the individual teacher, and the classroom practice itself;
- the connection and the missing links of practical knowledge, as professional knowledge, with the students' learning; and
- the continuity of professional development that involves both teachers' and students' learning.

## **6.2 The interplay of the three crucial elements of professional Development: the institutional context, the individual teacher, and the classroom practice**

The findings reveal that the three lecturers' learning occurs when there is an interplay between the institutional context, the individual teacher, and classroom practice. The three elements contribute to generating the teachers' cognition of effective practice in their professional development. They always interact with and influence each other in the teachers' process of learning.

### ***6.2.1 The institutional context***

The first element influential to the teachers' learning is the institutional context. There are two major levels to be considered: the national context and the Rajabhat context. The two levels of context serve as the frame of references for the teachers' sense making, whereas the teachers, with subjectivity, interpret their experiences within the references. The teachers, and the context within which they operate, are always involved in a process of reciprocal construction of meaning (van den Berg, 2002).

#### **The national context**

The national context frames national policies, systems and professional standards and values, and these become reference points demanding compliance from all Rajabhats and the individual teachers. The national context established two types of systems concerning the teaching profession: those affecting the teachers' lives and those affecting their professional practice. First is the system of recruitment and tenure resulting in the lecturer's status. A teaching position in a state university signifies the status of a government official. The tenure a lecturer holds is permanent, meaning that s/he can stay in her/his teaching career until retirement. A transfer to another Rajabhat, or university, does not terminate the government official status, but may result in annual appraisal.



Second is the regulation that after one to two years of tenure, lecturers can take leave to further their advanced studies and are eligible to receive full monthly salary during their studies. Upon their return, they have better chances for promotion, as well as being able to teach courses at a more advanced level. Third, is the reward for the attainment of an academic title. Compensation is continually given to lecturers until retirement. The systems can assure security for the lecturers to stay in that profession, facilitate, and encourage learning and development.

### **The Rajabhat context**

The Rajabhat context influences as well as interacts with the teachers. The first level is the institutional context. The Rajabhat context is imbued with a culture characterised as paradoxical since it is collective, but lacking in unity. It is collective in that the centralised administration structures a Rajabhat as a single unit. Different faculties and departments did not represent diversity. Central policies, and rules were applied to every faculty and individual teacher. The policy on professional development was implemented as budget allocation for formal learning, mainly outside Rajabhats. The participants did not feel opposed to this centralized administration. They interpreted it as support, and thereby allowing of opportunities for learning and development. They were eligible to have formal professional development according to their preferences.

The Rajabhat context is lacking in unity because there is scarcely any practice, such as structured collaboration for professional development or networking for improving teaching. Also, as can be seen from the findings, political issues causing factions were so prevalent that tension was found to be common in the academic environment. This was found in **Nanta's** and **Silk's** Rajabhats, which were unproductive in relation to any collaboration for professional development. Partly, this was because administrators paid more attention to their benefits and their own groups rather than to promoting academic development (Sinlarat, 2003). A context such as this does not seem to promote collegiality and collaboration for sustainable development. There was an

activity such as co-constructing a course book for a foundation English course in **Passorn**'s institute, but this was carried out for an immediate practical purpose, with no aim for further development.

The system of academic promotion by an attainment of academic title, emphasizing textbooks and research, does not acknowledge teaching improvement. Research activities were promoted, but most research was not related to students' learning. If classroom research was conducted, it was an individual mission and the results were rarely disseminated among colleagues, or the academic community. However, academic promotion became an incentive for the three participants. It encouraged **Nanta** to be further active in her ambition to be a professor in EFL teaching. For **Silk**, he completed his research for an academic title in the last year before his retirement. Unlike the other two participants, **Passorn**'s encouragement for professional growth was derived from the reward she obtained when working as a trainer. She received an award of Model Teacher during her service, and this reinforced her effective practice as well as confirmed her belief in communicative teaching strategies.

The findings showed that the participants were regularly involved in informal learning alongside formal learning. It can be noted that there is an assimilation of the meaning perceived from the references of the national context, of the Rajabhat context, and of the personal context. The derived meaning provided an understanding perspective for the teachers. They perceive these references as 'opportunities and affordances' (Knight, 2006). Consequently, they interpret the opportunities and affordances in association with support for career security, social recognition of the teaching profession and academic promotion. The meanings come into play with an awareness of the teachers' professional identities. These combined perceptions generate professional commitment, and result in an adoption of a tolerant view of the institutional context.

The tolerance is also obvious in the three participants' views in adjusting their lives in the work environment. Amidst the conflicts, **Silk** did not take any side in the opposing groups of colleagues. He remained calm and on good terms

with both groups. Likewise, **Passorn** took a policy of avoiding personal conflict, and showed a positive attitude to her colleagues when working together. **Nanta** pushed herself out of this tension and in the meantime obtained compensation for what she had been deprived of through informal learning and development.

The tolerance the participants have towards the institutional context shows that 'learning' occurring in the context embodies not only the knowledge of teaching, but also the knowledge of life. It is not only the development of professional knowledge, but also spiritual development. The participants gained spiritual wisdom of living harmoniously in their professional world.

As a consequence of the tolerant views, the participants accommodated the notion that their learning should be personal, self-motivated and individualistic. Therefore, they mobilised their own personal resources in their learning.

To conclude, the national and Rajabhat contexts provided general support for teachers to develop their professional knowledge, and the external support has been taken as opportunities and affordances for professional development. The teachers' meaning perspectives accommodate this support, and motivate them to learn. However, at the departmental level, support should be more specific, it should address, not only the notion of 'provision', but also the concept of 'generation' of learning. Opportunities should be perceived as opportunities for learning together. Since teachers are social beings, inseparable from relationships with other teachers (Hewitt, 1994), and interpret their experiences with other teachers (Mead, 1934), the department should serve as an environment in which the teachers join with their colleagues in a shared meaning-making process of learning.

### **6.2.2 *The teacher***

#### **The selves in the learning processes**

The stories of the three participants demonstrate that in the task of learning, the selves, and the personal perspectives of the teachers, play a crucial role. This is in accordance with Nias' view of 'substantial selves', consisting of 'self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes', and capable of determining a choice of learning (Nias, 1989: 203). In the social interactionistic view, the selves of the teachers possess mechanisms in learning, consisting of motivation, an ability to observe, a daring sense to challenge the unknown, and reflexivity generating awareness (Lauer and Handel, 1977). In the same view, the process of learning is a shared meaning making process between the teachers and the social context.

The substantial selves of the three teachers defined their learning in the context of practice as self-initiated. Learning is a reciprocal process between themselves and the 'reference groups' in the social context (Nias, 1989). Considering the learning process of each teacher, there should be more concepts of learning appropriate to explain what contributes to the learning involved by the teachers, aside from the substantial selves and the social context, which enabled them to conceptualise that learning is self-initiated.

According to Bandura (1977) learning is a reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors. Learning is maintained and strengthened by motivation, and the three attributes in the individual: self-direction, self-regulation, and self-efficacy beliefs. Goals and expectations of the outcome intervene in the learning process. All of these attributes and approaches are shown in the teachers' perspectives and behaviours in learning. The attributes dynamically have functioned in their cognitive process since their childhood, and then throughout the teachers' growth and career path. They were also seen functioning in their untiring pursuit of learning.

However, before the teachers set out for their learning, they should be stimulated with a motivation to learn. These three lecturers were stimulated by held professional values combined with the classroom context. This agrees with the concept of learning in constructivism, which emphasises the learners' awareness. This awareness is raised when the teachers are facing dilemmas in the 'realities of teaching' (Tsui, 2003). It is also raised in the teachers' conceptions of their own role as teachers, of their 'limits' and of their 'visions' of teaching

In **Nanta's** case, the 'legitimacy of being effective teachers (Moran, 1996), referring to an awareness of her professional role as a teacher and an EFL teacher, stimulated her and motivated her to direct herself and mobilise her capabilities to enter competitions for fellowships to study overseas. While involving in a series of formal professional development and through her strong self-efficacy beliefs in her future success, combined with a resolution to surpass unfairness in the institutional context, she managed to collect materials for her following plan to construct textbooks and conduct research. Her goal was that of an academic title. High motivation and strong self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1994) are active in her pursuit of learning.

Like **Nanta**, **Silk** was stimulated by an awareness of the role of an EFL teacher which was related to classroom practice. It was also an awareness of his limits in teaching effectively. At first, he set a goal of improving his communicative skills in English. An approach to the development was watching Hollywood movies without Thai subtitles every weekend. For years he managed his resources of time and money for the improvement of his language skills. Later, he set another goal of experiencing the culture of native speakers. During summer vacations, he worked as a trainer in Thai culture for the American Peace Corps volunteers. When he decided to teach tourism, he set a goal to enrich his experience of tour guiding by joining tours overseas. Immersing himself in the real experience, and observing the guides, was his way of learning. From **Silk**, an awareness of his professional role motivated him to learn, and he mobilised his time and resources for his professional learning.

Apart from being motivated by his professional awareness, **Silk**'s learning process can be described as a combination of constructivism (Moallem, 2000; Tynjala, 1999), social interactionism (Mead, 1934; Lauer and Handel 1977), and experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). It is intrinsic motivation as well as professional awareness that trigger his learning. The goal of intended learning, opportunities for learning, settings, and the learning processes are structured by himself. There is an evident link between an impact of informal learning on the construction and appropriation of practical knowledge which is heavily imbued with beliefs related to discipline knowledge, and recognition of the relevance of knowledge to the future career of students.

However, there is not much experiential and constructivist learning from the classrooms. Learning resulting in appropriation of these two aspects of knowledge is not as remarkable as learning from the outside settings. This is because his perception of the student context is not obvious enough.

**Passorn**'s motivation to learn was different. She was requested to take a training responsibility. She evaluated her potential, her future responsibilities as trainer and knowledge and experience obtained from taking on this role. She viewed that the responsibility was demanding and time-consuming, but she was willing to put effort into it. She felt that she had enough potential to carry on the work. The goal was set that she would put her best effort to fulfil the duties. It was a long journey to create any impact—a change in the secondary school teaching. It was also a journey of her learning through experience. The belief in her potential, and willingness for the role, motivated her to involve herself in this responsibility, which exposed her to a great deal of knowledge and experience. In **Passorn**'s case, learning places demands upon her personal resources as well as requiring great effort.

Because the awareness of learning is subjective, and each participant's learning process involved personal aspects and although her/his learning was related to their context of practice, especially the classroom context, the participants

perceived their learning as personal. Also, in the departmental context, lecturers have different expertise in different areas of English. Lecturers tend to develop knowledge in their own areas. Therefore, the awareness or vision of teaching occurs in the direction of the area of expertise.

### **Personal background constituting learning**

Besides ‘subjective awareness’, and self-efficacy beliefs, there are other important elements that contribute to the teachers’ development.

The participating teachers’ stories disclose a link between personal dispositions and previous experiences and their commitment to their teaching role and development. The contributed elements are as follows:

- personal context;
- personal dispositions and personal perspectives

### **Personal context**

The teachers’ ways of life are linked with their work (Pinar, 1988; Hoyle and John, 1995). In the study, two of the participants’ personal contexts had influenced their approaches to learning since they were very young. The supportive family environment contributed to motivating them to develop their English skills. Resources available to them at home assured them that development was possible. Educated parents, for **Nanta**, and a father who was proficient in English, for **Passorn**, became role models for them to develop their English competence. This was followed by enthusiasm, which kept the participants concentrating on practice. This is evident when **Nanta** and **Passorn** attempted to improve their English during their secondary education.

In their professional learning, family support was still strong and consistent. The participants’ family, their children, and husbands/wives, and even parents or siblings, supported them one way or another. For example, **Nanta**’s and **Passorn**’s attendance of professional development courses was possible because their parents helped them take care of their children. Their husbands

and children understood that as teachers they needed to develop their knowledge. Therefore the family members adjusted to the prioritisation of professional growth (Burke and McDonnell, 1992). As for **Silk**, although he did not have parental support in his childhood, he was fortunate in that his wife and daughter loved travelling with him. They had an understanding of his desire to familiarise himself with the professional level of tour guiding. A strong family bond is apparent in contributing to the participants' learning.

Moreover, economic status is another important issue in the participants' professional development. The economic status of these lecturers was stable and comfortable. There was no interference with financial security needs (Burke and McDonnell, 1992). When they aimed to develop their professional knowledge, they had no concerns in relation to the expense of professional growth programs. Their vision of development was directed towards learning. Therefore, their participation in professional development was always active.

It can be concluded that teachers' personal context, located within its socio-educational context are integral in teachers' professional development, their motivation for learning, and their meaning concerning with improvement (Hayes, 1997).

### **Personal dispositions and personal perspectives**

Typical active qualities ingrained in the teachers direct them to search for self-improvement. Obviously, these teachers showed their enthusiasm to learn in order to fulfil their role of teaching. They appeared to be conscientious and persistent in their pursuit of professional learning. They were well organised and well-managed in their learning. More importantly, their personal values and aspirations influenced their decisions to be involved in professional development. They integrated their personal values with professional growth. Personal values and aspirations, combined with unique individual dispositions, regulate them to become leading figures in their growth.

The three lecturers did not show their frustration about their teaching career and practice. Besides adopting a tolerant attitude towards the context, they showed



patience towards the students. Nevertheless, their personal beliefs about learning are at variants with the students. The participants believed that learning is on-going, and self-directed. When opportunities were open, they took opportunities to learn. When they were not satisfied with open opportunities, they sought their own opportunities and structured their own learning. They also had a positive belief that they would become successful in what they had intended.

The students believed that learning is the process of acquiring knowledge provided by the teachers. They viewed that besides being a provider of 'correct' knowledge, the teacher should closely guide them in their learning. The students were reluctant to be autonomous learners. Teachers' explanations were very important for their learning. Their learning strategies were designed to pass tests. Opportunities for further learning outside the classroom were not sought. The teachers' beliefs of learning resulted in their expectations for the students. While the teachers expected the students to depend more on themselves in working on assignments as their process of learning, the students insisted on more guidance and explanation from the teachers. When the teachers attempted to raise the content to their expected level, the students found it too difficult. The clash between the teachers' and students' beliefs is persistent.

### **The individual pattern of professional learning**

Within six years of entering a teaching career, these participants furthered their study at a masters degree level. They took advantage of the opportunities offered in the institutional context. The three participants in the study did not express their impression of the advanced courses in which they studied. **Passorn** was rather disappointed, but had an admiration of the native speaker teachers because they based their teaching on practical aspects. She found that the knowledge they demonstrated was relevant to her teaching context. One typical feature of their perception of learning is that they valued the

development of English proficiency in actual settings and through interaction with native speakers or experts.

As mentioned earlier, the participants viewed their professional learning as personal and subjective. These views were reflected in their patterns of learning as individualistic. Each pattern is shown as follows:

### **Nanta**

<b>Source of motivation</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Mode of learning</b>
Teachers' role	-Formal course: MA -Informal learning for academic title	Classroom
EFL teaching	-Formal course: MA, UK -Informal learning	Classroom
Sociocultural background knowledge USA	-Formal training course -Informal learning for academic title	Classroom
Administrative role	-Formal trainingcourse -Informal learning, <i>aiming at academic title</i>	-Classroom -Duty of programme <i>chair</i>

In **Nanta's** pattern of professional development, formal and informal learning occurred alongside each other. She consistently identified the questions concerning her teaching role, and sought possible answers. When she was aware of her limitations, and desired to fulfil a role she was performing, she was likely to turn to formal development courses. They became sources of her English competence development, content and teaching, as well as other relevant aspects of knowledge. The knowledge she gained was then integrated into her classroom, her informal learning for professional growth, and thus

strengthened her other roles. Conclusively, **Nanta**'s professional development was constituted by her awareness of her professional role. Knowledge from formal and informal activities became the input and resources for her classroom practice. There is a clear, and strong, link between formal and informal professional development. Her two types of learning reinforce each other.

### **Passorn**

<b>Source of motivation</b>	<b>Mode of learning</b>	<b>Practice</b>
Awareness of trainer's role	-Series of training courses - Informal learning	-Training other teachers -Classroom -ERIC manager
Practice situations	-Formal courses	-Training -Administrative work

**Passorn**'s professional development also manifests itself in the coexistence of formal and informal knowledge. The intensive 'master training courses' run by the British Council provided her with training as well as skills in teaching English with a communicative approach. The pedagogical knowledge and competence was stored in her repertoire. It then was applied actively in her preparation and teaching processes for her subsequent training courses for teachers. After a training course, she observed the trainees, coached them, and gained feedback from them. Reflection on the feedback helped her conceptualise what should be adjusted in the following training.

There is also a coexistence of formal and informal learning in **Passorn**'s professional development. The formal knowledge from the master training courses became the knowledge base of her informal learning derived from her own training tasks.

**Passorn's** learning is of a similar nature to experiential learning, which revolves in a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). She experimented in knowledge and methods with the trainees, and then paid them follow-up visits to see how they coped with their teaching in the classroom. Meanwhile, she also evaluated her own work. She learned from the master training, and from field experience. When she returned to attend a formal training course, her knowledge was reinforced.

### **Silk**

<b>Source of motivation</b>	<b>Mode of learning</b>	<b>Practice</b>
EFL teacher's role	Informal learning	Classroom
-ESP teacher's role -Professional standard	-Formal courses -Informal learning	-Classroom -Attainment of academic title

**Silk's** pattern of professional development is emphatically informal. Like **Nanta**, he questioned his potential and limits, then set out to gain knowledge and experience in his own ways. He structured his learning according to specific goals, mainly concerning his English proficiency, and the content knowledge.

It is typical for **Silk** to search for knowledge and experience outside his workplace. He had a tendency to learn in a relaxed and entertaining style. More importantly, he had to immerse himself in the situations of learning repetitively and over time until he felt that he was satisfied. His informal learning was carried out at intervals, but alongside formal learning. Meanwhile, his regular practice, his performance, and his current content knowledge and related pedagogical knowledge, were consistently reflected on. Informal learning, not only added on his knowledge and experience, but also provided him different perspectives to verify several aspects of his practice in the classroom. Informal

learning serves as a platform for him to be more capable of performing a diversified role from teaching English to teaching English for specific purposes.

In summary, the participants employ their personal attributes to manage their learning. Their personal and institutional context provided support for them to pursue their learning. The knowledge was then fed into the classroom as well as their professional growth. For all three there was a strong and beneficial interplay between formal learning from structured input (such as courses) and informal learning from self-initiated use of naturally arising opportunities. Although the emphasis varied—**Nanta** for example, had greater involvement in formal learning than Silk who greatly valued informal learning—the interplay between the two types of learning was clear.

The individual pattern of learning demonstrates a distinct interplay between formal and informal learning as below.

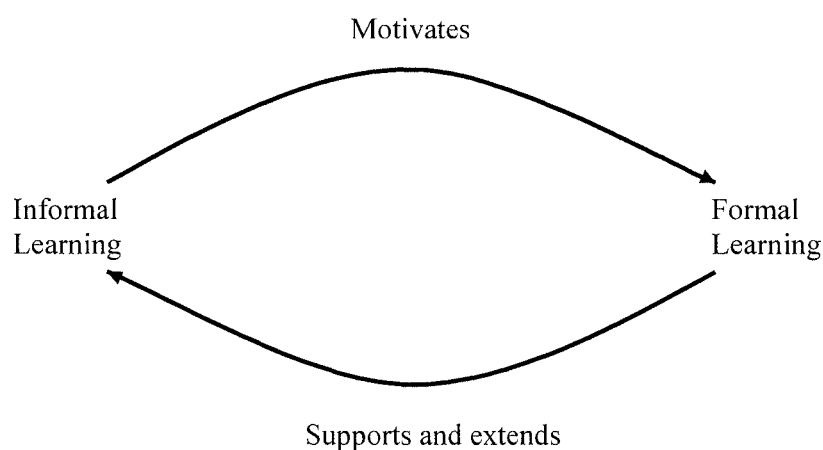


Figure 1: The interplay between formal and informal learning

The interplay between formal and informal learning shows that the training paradigm (Marshall, 1998) has a strong impact on professional development of the three lecturers when they are actively involved in the two modes of learning. This can lessen the gap between their thinking in the formal courses

and in their re-interpretation of it in their practice (Breen et al., 1989). Continuous involvement in formal professional development, when activated by consistent informal learning provides opportunities for teachers to explore their practical knowledge in depth (Veenman et al., 1994). Furthermore, there is some to high extent of modifying and integrating ideas or knowledge from formal learning into informal learning, and the practice (Stallings, 1989).

### ***6.2.3 The classroom***

The other constituent that interacts with the teachers in generating learning is the classroom. The teachers and the classroom regularly influence each other. The teachers exert their beliefs, attitudes, emotions and knowledge in the classroom, whereas the latter makes the teachers reconceptualise and restructure their beliefs and teaching styles.

#### **Teachers' learning from the classroom**

The role of the classroom is crucial to the teachers' professional development. The teachers' classroom practice conglomerates all aspects concerning the teachers. Their thinking and beliefs constitute their practice, and from these how the teachers learn from classroom practice can be identified. Burns (1996) points out that the teachers' thinking and beliefs reflect their 'intercontextual' interpretations on three levels: 1) institutional culture; 2) personal philosophy, attitudes, and beliefs about teaching, including expectations about the subject and learners; and 3) thinking about specific instruction processes, decisions on tasks, materials and resources, and their role in managing the classroom. From the study it was found that the lecturers' intercontextual thinking and beliefs constituting their practice covers both the institutional context and the classroom context.

In the institutional context the common theme found among the participants concerns the type of students in the Rajabhat setting. They view them as having

‘low performance’. These students’ characteristics became the teachers’ important ‘conceptual schema’, which guided them in structuring the content and managing the instruction. They then adjust the content, materials, and measures to facilitate instruction, to regulate the students to learn, and to assess the students’ learning.

**Nanta**’s schema came from the type of students in each class. They helped her identify criteria for selecting materials and adjusting teaching processes. Every semester, the classroom and students offered her a new context to learn about. She explained, ‘Different groups of students give me different contexts to appropriate my teaching methods’. The student schema informed her to set these tasks to learn from the classroom and occurred from:

1. observing types of students during the first or second class meetings to determine their level of performance;
2. adapting the teaching materials to the level of the students;
3. adapting teaching techniques to accord with the content of the materials and the students; and
4. adapting the assessment approach.

Also, it is apparent that the classroom made her examine her role as a teacher of English. It raised a professional awareness of the qualities the EFL teacher should possess. It made her turn to formal professional development courses in order to acquire those qualities. Being able to base her teaching on theoretical principles, not only on experience alone, is a quality, as well as a value, that an EFL teacher should have. Being able to use the English language efficiently both in the communicative and academic levels is another quality the EFL teacher should possess. This awareness was triggered by her reflection on the professional role in the classroom.

**Passorn** took the classroom as a ‘lab’ where she can experiment with acquired theories, and thus learn from using them. She interacted with the students, using these mechanisms:

1. deliberate planning of teaching;
2. experimenting with some teaching techniques;
3. repeating using them in similar situations to see what works and does not;
4. reflecting and conceptualizing ways to make them work;
5. continually improve materials, or teaching aids; and
6. critically reflecting on the students' performance in order to see what hinders their learning.

**Passorn** cultivated her knowledge from the classroom in this manner, and the students provided references for her.

**Silk** saw his classroom as a setting in which he learned to adapt his role, shape, and reshape the practical knowledge and teaching strategies. With respect to the classroom practice, at first he perceives his image as an EFL teacher who should acquire fluency in using English. This perception urges him to get involved in an improvement of English skills in a relaxing way. Improved skills make him feel more confident in performing the role. Later, he sees the need to brush up his skills, and feels a desire to work with native speakers. The knowledge and experience of American culture is fed in to the classroom.

Learning from professional guides on several tours around the world, and learning from local people, is also derived from his perception in relation to the students' learning. He conceptualised that the students, as future professional guides, should be equipped with both theoretical and practical knowledge. Therefore, he modified the content of English for tourism, and the teaching process. Reflection relating to the students, and how their knowledge could be applicable in the real world, triggers his perception of change.

In conclusion, the context interacts at multi-levels with the teachers in their learning process. The national context is static and coercive, but also supportive, whereas the institutional context, as centralised and conflicting, had



an influence on their perspectives of their professional and personal lives. The participants decided to be tolerant and indifferent towards the conflicts and political issues in their work environment. They focused on their responsibilities, and the students, as their commitment. They adopted their view that professional development is a personal mission, and individualistic. Their teaching conceptions were directed towards the classrooms.

### **The integration of acquired knowledge into the classroom**

The acquired knowledge from formal and informal learning was blended with other forms of knowledge for teaching, including the teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions. It became practical knowledge applied in classroom practice. Scholars point out that practical knowledge consists of these features:

- Personal theories developed by teachers through their interpretation and application of professional theories in practical situations.
- Practical knowledge tends to be customary (Oakshott, 1962), tacit (Polanyi, 1958), intuitive (Davenport, 1997), specific, social, and personal (Elbaz, 1983; Connelly and Clandinin, 1995).
- Practical knowledge is experience dependent (Tickle, 1987).

The features of the three participants' knowledge are in accordance with the statements above. The knowledge is rooted in that generated by experts, and in advanced learning from formal courses. This propositional knowledge is synthesised with personal theories and beliefs.

The three participants' practical knowledge emphasized its different aspects. **Nanta** emphasised the content knowledge of the course. This results in her material selection and teaching process. Knowledge transmission with explanation and simplification of the content is her dominant teaching style.

Judgement on material selection was based on the teacher's belief that literature should provide moral lessons. Students' age and levels are also taken into account in the teacher's consideration. Flexible teaching, depending on each class, is primarily utilised.

*Nanta accepted the importance of peer help in managing learning for students. She considered that this strategy was part of independent learning, or a learner-centred approach. She also introduced an approach of having the students respond to the literary text through drawings. This can be evidence that she made learning move closer to the students.*

**Passorn's** practical knowledge was strongly influenced by the British Council training which followed the Joyce and Showers' model (1988). Her practical knowledge was concerned with two courses: English for communication and the methodology for teaching English. The three Ps strategies: were predominantly used in teaching English for communication. **Passorn** maintained class disciplines as a strategy to help the students learn, and the teacher's close supervision and extra help were considered very important in students' learning.

**Passorn** put more emphasis on the students' responsibility in learning in the methodology class. Learning was generated by the students from tasks in the preparation of teaching presentation. Her belief in the preparation for learning was obvious in her 'quality assurance criteria'. The student teachers needed to have adequate knowledge of the English content on the level they were to teach. The students viewed that in involving this type of learning, they believed they generated a major portion of knowledge.

**Silk's** knowledge base of tourism was acquired from training experts in tourism. However, the later strategies for tour guiding were acquired through his observations on professional guides. His radical change of the practical knowledge on tourism reflected his personal theories that the 'how to' was the core part of the course, and more important than the theoretical aspect. The

‘how to’ included the tour guides’ sensitivity for the customers. Practicum is a must. He tried to make the students see that information on tourist attractions was to be generated by the students. The information should be recited directly from the students’ production of information. Therefore, a strong background of syntactical knowledge was needed

**Silk** also involved the students in tasks, such as presentations, including simulation of tour guiding to reinforce his ‘know how’ theory. His useful tips as an experienced tourist were provided to the students as knowledge. Field trips to tourist attractions were arranged for students as practical experience.

Besides the aspects stated above, the practical knowledge of these participants also included one common feature. That is the precautionary measure. This agrees with Elbaz’s (1983) ‘rules of practice’. The rules guide the teachers in particular situations in their practice. When planning, with their experience, the three lecturers took a precautionary measure to predict what problems were likely to arise in class. The usual prediction was if the students did not understand the task, the teacher would spend more time explaining how to do it. Another example is if the teacher observed that some students could not follow the instructions of the task smoothly, she would take the whole class back to the previous stage to involve the students in more practice thus making them feel more confident.

To check the students’ understanding, the teachers usually assessed progress through questions in class, homework assignments, and other tasks such as presentations. The classroom situations involving the students and teachers were rather customary - the teachers taught the courses repetitively. They tended to follow previous plans. However, alterations which were derived as a result of learning from the previous course could be found, but it was doubtful that they were related to the students’ side, the teachers’ expectation of how the course should be managed, or of how the content should be structured. Although a teacher’s management of learning manifested itself in their attempt to acknowledge the students’ needs and problems in learning, teachers’

practical knowledge was still heavily based on their personal theories, beliefs, and expectations. Very little account was taken of the students' context.

The classroom and the students contribute as a core element that motivates the three teachers to learn and develop their professional knowledge. The classroom can trigger the teachers to learn, and their motivation is inseparable from the students and their learning. This is in accordance with Sawyer's (2001) study that the decisions teachers make in their professional development clearly reflect their concern about students' learning. However, the three teachers' classroom practice also reflects a considerable extent of teachers' personalities, beliefs, and ways of thinking about learning and teaching, rules of thumb, intuition and values. These aspects greatly influence the integration of practical knowledge into the classroom. Teachers' perspectives of teaching and learning are formed early and resistant to change (Thanasoulas, 2002). In this way, learning of teachers, as well as of students as the 'joint construction of meaning' (Clark and Yinger, 1987) is difficult to occur. The classroom is regularly taken as a source to transmit teachers' practical knowledge.

### **6.3 The connection and the missing links between teachers' professional, practical knowledge and the students' learning**

#### ***6.3.1 The connection***

In the study it can be seen that the three teachers' professional development was an on-going process. Their practical professional knowledge was also developed continually and integrated into the classroom, which was their baseline of learning. A connection occurs when the teachers' teaching perspectives, including personal dispositions, merge to penetrate the student's context. It is obvious that **Passorn** and her knowledge reached the students' learning. She achieved this because she emphasised the process of learning more than the amount of content the students should learn in a semester. She 'did not teach the book'. In class, she made sure that the students were still following the content. She made it clear that the students should become

involved in tasks. She was approachable to the students. She gave students' choices in their learning. She supported them, and counselled them, even in their personal problems which could obstruct their learning. Prosser and Trigwell (1999) call this the 'student-focused' approach to teaching and then assert that teachers who adopt such an approach can generate higher quality learning outcomes.

**Passorn** did not put very high expectations on student learning because she believed that the students' performance was low. This realisation of the students' performance and the large classes she taught made her plan deliberately, and adapt her assessments method in order to get closer to the students. This is evident when she requested the students to create a dialogue on their own. This task was to be the students' production. Through the presentation of each pair of students, she asked them to assess their oral performance in their presentation, and to point out their mistakes and how to correct them. She modelled the use of language items and also corrected their mistakes. This type of assessment was her method of classroom management, encouraging the students' to understand as much as they possibly could.

Her aim to get very close to the students was also seen in her teaching of another course on the methodology of teaching English. She assigned group work, and supervised them closely along the process of preparation for their presentations. In this way she taught them, made them learn, and learned with them. Communication made learning occur in the community of which the teacher and the students are members. Although she stated that '[I]f the students could get about 60% from the classroom, I would be satisfied', she still had this firm belief:

"Knowledge does not come from the teachers only. Students also generate knowledge from their problems."

The students' feedback showed that her belief was put into practice, and as a consequence the students realised that they generated their own knowledge. The students claimed that most knowledge was generated from them, from their

practical task involvement, and from the teacher's emphasis on reaching the students' learning.

In summary, **Passorn**'s practical professional knowledge connects with the students' learning. Her practice stimulated the students to create deep approaches to their learning (Marton and Saljo, 1984; Ramsden, 2003). Her practice can be explained by Ramsden (2003) who indicates one crucial characteristic that can generate a deep approach to learning. The characteristic is

“stimulating and considerate teaching, especially teaching which demonstrates the lecturer's personal commitment to the subject matter and stresses its meaning and relevance to the students”.(80).

Also, her commitment to connect her teaching with the students' learning is confirmed by various studies on students' learning in relation to the teacher-student relationship, such as Bliss and Osborn (1977, Ramsden (1988, cited in Ramsden, 2003: 74). Her practice demonstrates these factors: encouraging involvement, commitment and interest, showing 'respect for students', creating 'lecturer-student rapport', employing 'individual guidance', and moving closely towards 'student-centredness'.

### **6.3.2 The missing link**

The students in **Nanta**'s class expressed their frustrations towards their learning in the literature and reading classes. There was a disconnection between the teacher's practical professional knowledge and the students' learning. This is due to the discrepancies between the teachers' beliefs and expectations about teaching and learners on one side, and the students' beliefs and expectations of teaching and learning on the other.

**Nanta** viewed that the emphasis of teaching literature was to make the students understand the texts in relation to the thoughts of the period in which the text is located. She expected the students to learn about these aspects, and to

understand that literature is about life. She also expected that the students' English competence would be developed through listening, reading and writing tasks. The selected texts ranging from the works of authors such as Beowulf, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge and so on. The texts are difficult for Thai students whose English is not even a second language. She realised this and helped them by explaining vocabulary and sentences, as they seemed to appear difficult for the students. She occasionally guided the students to the relevance of the thought expressed in the literature in real life. What she really wanted was that the students understand the text. She was not too demanding, but instead showed her empathy towards them when she applied the 'continuous assessment' approach.

However, the students felt they were 'battling' in their learning. Their perspectives about teaching contradicted those of the teachers. The English explanation made it harder for the students to understand. It became another barrier aside from the language items appearing in the text. When the teachers assigned group work in an expectation that peer help would make the students feel comfortable to work, and then they would be able to complete the assignment, the students did not consider group work as a good way of learning.

The disconnection between teaching and learning can be identified from different sources. It is rooted from both the teacher's personal context, and the students' context. In **Nanta's** perspective, learning is self-directed and much of the understanding of the content should be the responsibility of the students. Reading is the students' independent task to gain understanding. Therefore, she expected the students to be involved in a great deal of preparation before class, and in revision of the content after class. As for her nature, she was a conscientious student, always searching for knowledge, and has been an avid reader. Consequently, the students were expected to be the same.

However, the students' context made the teacher's expectation rather impossible. The students' reluctance to read and be prepared before class, or

revise following the lesson by reading, is a national social issue. According to the NESDB report on the social conditions of Thailand, the reading rate of the Thai people in their daily life, between 2001-2004 was 1.1% (The National Economic and Social Development Board, 2005: 16), and within the same years, it was found that the English competency of high school graduates, higher education institution students, and graduates was considered weak (Ibid: 2). Without the desire to read, the students saw no value in reading literature. More importantly, they saw no relevance of reading literature in another language, which they found very hard and irrelevant to their lives.

As shaped by the social context, and their attitude towards reading texts in English, the students adopted surface approaches to learning. They were attentive in class, studied when having tests, and 'tried to survive'. In a situation like this, not only were the students battling with the course, but the teachers also were battling to get the students to learn 'the knowledge'. This gap did not appear to be bridged as the learning perspectives of each party did not encourage deep learning.

**Silk** had very high expectations of the subject content of the English for tourism course, and those expectations resulted in an emphasis on the 'how to' or the practical part of the knowledge. His teaching of this course in the classroom showed this expectations and beliefs. Like other teachers, he expected the students to be self-motivated in their learning. He tried very hard to make the students realise the importance of the 'how to' aspects. Several methods were employed in order to achieve this. For example, the field trip, simulation, and presentations were arranged as core classroom tasks in order to improve the students' confidence, and familiarise them with tour guiding techniques. However, there was a clash between the teachers' expectations and those of the students. This was due to many reasons which are derived not only from the students, but also from the institutional context.

The students, like other Rajabhat students in general, have not been trained to become independent learners. They depended on the teachers to provide



knowledge, explain more clearly, provide more directions of the classroom tasks and assessment, and enforce discipline. While the teachers tried to create a relaxing learning atmosphere, the students took this as a chance to pay less attention, but serious students were confused with what assignment was an official test. Some students appreciated the teacher's talent and expertise and recognised the value of classroom activities. Others, however, saw no relevance of the knowledge to their lives.

The perception of the irrelevance of the course was due to the institutional contextual factor. In Rajabhat, the programme of study was arranged for the students. English for tourism was a required course in the business English programme, and in that year it was arranged for second-year students. Their unwillingness to learn was caused by firstly, their English competency, and secondly their perception of their future career. English for tourism is a content specific subject requiring a higher or advanced level of English. The content is dense with information, and the practical aspects demand both a good command of English and remarkable personality traits. Because of this demanding nature of the course, the students felt discouraged, and wanted more guidance and support from the teacher.

As for the students' perception of a future career, the second-year students were uncertain. Being a tour guide was an ideal for some, but not for most of them. The irrelevance of the course was perceived when the students had to study a subject they thought was of no use to them. This is a serious issue and should be directed to the administration, as course choices should be determined by student preference. Students should have a right to select a course that suits their need and level.

The issue of the disconnection of the teachers' practical professional knowledge and the students' learning is disheartening because it shows that the teachers are very willing to teach the students and want them to learn, but the students do not enjoy the particular learning provided and see no significance in the course. They just 'learn something' in order to pass the course. Also, the professional

learning that the teachers have been developing continually over a long span of their career does not connect with the students' learning. The teachers have a well-developed base of knowledge, but in this practical knowledge base, a crucial awareness of the students' context is still lacking. However, this issue cannot be addressed by a teacher in relation to a particular group of students. It encompasses the whole context of learning - the classroom, the students, teachers, and the institution.

## 6.4 Continuity of professional development

### 6.4.1 *The coexistence of formal professional development courses and informal learning*

The study showed that in the participants' knowledge base there is a coexistence of formal and informal professional knowledge, which reinforce each other. Two teachers in this study were engaged in formal professional courses and their knowledge and practice were influenced by them. **Nanta** always found answers to her inquiries of her role from professional development, whereas **Passorn**'s concept of teaching was completely altered. This impact of formal courses is contradictory to the views of scholars and researchers such as Lortie (1975), Kwo (1994) and Roberts (1998). The views reflect an uncertainty of the impact of formal training, especially the Joyce and Showers model. In the three teachers' practical knowledge base, there is a mutual interaction of formal and personal practical professional knowledge, and they generate change in the teachers' practice (Marvin et al., 1996).

Although the activities the teachers were involved in fall into the training paradigm which was criticised by educators as lacking impact because its training delivery style is primarily knowledge transmission, it was found that the training paradigm works effectively with EFL lecturers. For example, **Nanta**'s desire to learn the pedagogical knowledge of teaching was fulfilled. The courses provided her with knowledge essential for teaching English. **Passorn** stated the notable and prominent characteristics that formal courses

should be designed on the basis of actual application. It should focus on an integration of English proficiency and English language teaching methodology and should be on-going in order that the teachers can maintain their proficiency as well as teaching expertise.

The feature concerning the integration of language proficiency and the knowledge of teaching English is vital in EFL professional development. It is essential for any EFL professional development training, workshop, or seminar to include these two aspects of EFL knowledge. This is because as non-native speakers of English, EFL teachers' English language proficiency should be continually developed and maintained. English language proficiency is content knowledge, an important domain in EFL practical knowledge. As evident from the study, the participants benefited immensely in an immersion programme in a native speaking country, situation, or training course in which they can interact with native speakers in improving their English competency and teaching competence. Therefore, formal professional development courses focusing on the integration of language proficiency development are very crucial to the sustainability of the teachers' knowledge.

### **The classroom as a source for teachers' learning**

From the study, there are two levels of professional learning. On the first level, the three participants continually developed their knowledge to fulfil their role as an EFL teacher with an aim to improve their classroom practice. On the second level they claimed that they learned from their classroom experience. It helps them to adjust their practice. However, the findings show that the level of teachers' learning from the classroom at the stage of 'being experienced' is less active. Although one participant's teaching was able to penetrate the students' culture and reach their learning, her held views of her preferred teaching method are likely to exist longer in her practice due to her previous success. As for the other two participants, they slightly adjusted their practical knowledge according to the students' performance and levels. They based their judgement on their teaching experience over time to 'fine-tune' their teaching. In doing

this, they were less frustrated, but it was the students who became frustrated in their place.

In terms of sustainability and the continual development of teachers' professional knowledge, the classroom context should provide on-going learning for the teacher in order that the teachers' practical professional knowledge links with the students' learning. To establish a link, change should be perceived by the teachers whenever necessary. Change is derived from self-awareness. To create self-awareness is difficult. To teach ourselves by reflecting, examining and evaluating our action, and to admit that it needs improvement is difficult as well as painful.

The key word the participants refer to when they claimed that the classroom was a source for their learning is experience. To them, experience is existing schema concerning content knowledge, rules of practice (Elbaz, 1983), beliefs about teaching, and personal values. Being dependent on experience, the teachers recall the schema and draw on them for an adjustment of the novel and unfamiliar teaching situations. In this case, adjustment of practice is not entirely a result of learning as the novel situations in the classroom were not perceived as new by the teachers. When the adjustment is very brief, and requires no intensive involvement, it is not learning. In order to learn significantly from experience, they must perceive unfamiliar happenings as novel, then question themselves and their practice, try to disorient themselves from the existing schema, and aim for new possibilities to tackle novel happenings in the classroom (Field and Macintyre Latta, 2001; Boud and Walker, 1990). As experienced teachers, the participants' perspectives of experience should be changed. Thereby, their learning can be developed and their practice can meet the students' learning.

Another issue concerning the participants' perspectives of the classroom as a source of their professional development can be noted. It appears that the classroom is a context in which they regularly transmit their knowledge to the students, manage the students learning in the firmly held process of teaching, or

adjust the knowledge according to the held belief. Teaching in the classroom seems to be viewed as teaching to make the students learn knowledge about something, or to work on particular tasks.

The continuity of teachers' professional development can be possible when learning occurs on two levels. Firstly, when they are involved in the formal development structured by other people, and in the informal development structured by themselves. The knowledge from both modes then is integrated into personal practical professional knowledge. Secondly, when the teachers applied their knowledge in the classroom. Learning occurs at this stage again, and it is crucial as the teachers activate their practical knowledge in connection with the students. Learning from the classroom has to depend on the teachers' awareness of their practice. Therefore, ways to stimulate their awareness should be employed. Scholars suggest reflective practice, (Schon, 1987), action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986), and the use of the concept of meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991) in promoting the teachers' awareness of their classroom practice. Actually, these approaches are nothing new or unfamiliar to the participants, but to put these approaches into practice requires a change in their perspectives on their customary practical environment. This change in perspective should make them revise all aspects of their practical knowledge in order that their practice can reach the students, generate learning on a deep level, and thereby develop their professional knowledge and the students' learning.

Nevertheless, learning to change the teachers' perspectives and practice should not be taken as personal, or subjective. As has been mentioned before, the meaning making of one's own action is difficult. It has been recommended that the sense of meaning making should be activated in a collaborative activity, or in a community (Clark and Easen, 1992). This seems to be problematic in the Rajabhat context, where collegiality is not an established culture. However, one has to take an optimistic view on the possibilities change can generate. In this case, it should be expected that change in the teachers' perspectives and

classroom practice can lead to teacher development, and a change involving the whole institutional context (Fullan, 1993).

## 6.5 Evolving explanatory models

The following models sum up the key concepts concerning professional development revealed by this study.

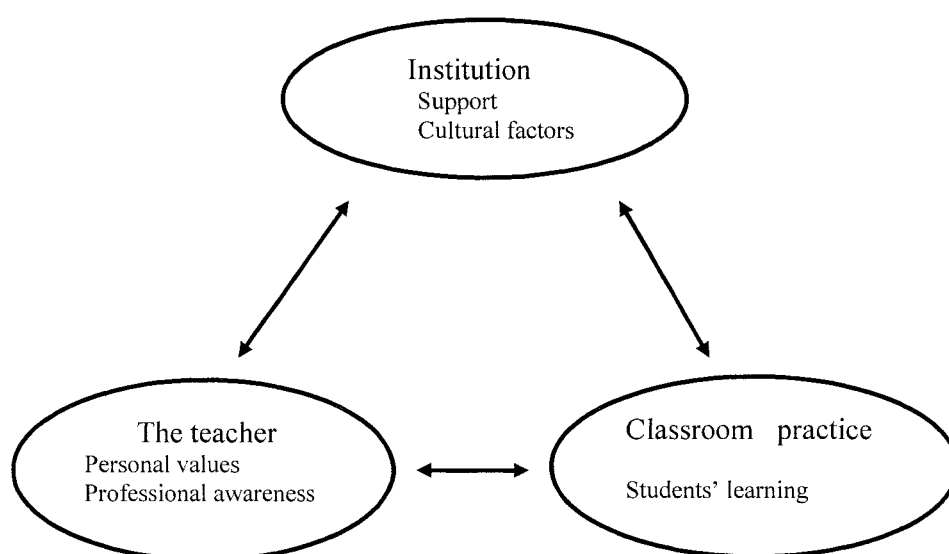


Figure 2: Creation of professional knowledge

Professional development occurs when the three constituents in Figure 2 interact: the institution within which the teachers work, the individual teacher, and the classroom in which the teacher practices. The institution provides the contextual support for teacher learning. On the other hand, some typical institutional cultures can impact on the teachers' pursuit of their growth through informal learning. The individual teacher takes support from the institutional context, and becomes self-directed in searching for relevant professional knowledge. The classroom contributes to the teachers' development by stimulating professional awareness, and the personal values of the teachers, and motivating them to learn formally and informally.

The interplay of the three constituents, the institutional context, the individual teacher, and the classroom, to some extent, is in line with general propositions of staff developers such as Brew (1995), Blackwell, et al. (2003), Nicholls (2001), and Blackmore et al. (1999) who place an emphasis that professional development generates learning from the individual level to the institutional level.

However, the extent to which professional development improves student learning is not consistent. Two out of three participating lecturers' professional knowledge and teaching did not impact on student learning because they seemed less aware of the complex nature of the student context. Therefore, there should be further interplay between professional knowledge and classroom practice as illustrated in Figure 3.

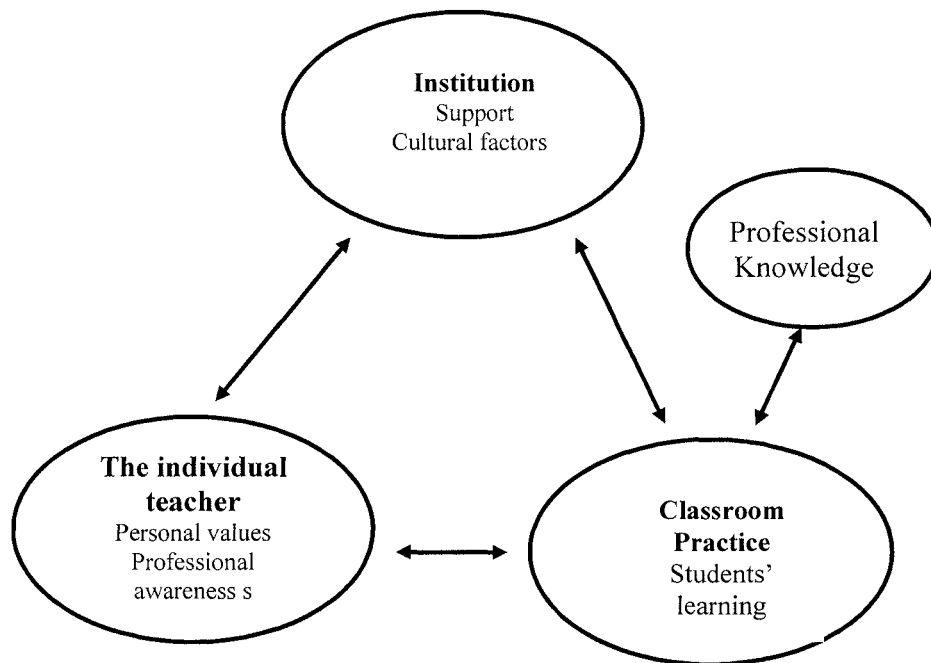


Figure 3: The relationship between professional knowledge and classroom

In their continual development, the participants' acquired knowledge has been synthesized into personal practical knowledge which then was integrated into

the classroom. Professional development from the classroom is not sufficiently generated to improve student learning. This is where teachers' learning and development should continue, but it seems difficult to occur as the teachers tend to hold on to their beliefs and preferred methods of teaching. Their 'substantial selves', self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes' (Nias 1989: 203) firmly determine their intent, and their actions in teaching, particularly their perceptions concerning from the classroom context. As a result, 'the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible' (Abrams, 1996: 58) still exist in their experiential knowledge since deep awareness of the student aspects is seldom raised in the normal practice (Field and Macintyre Latta, 2001).

Teacher learning from the classroom depends considerably on the teachers' meaning perspectives which should direct them to examine and critically question their practice. Teachers need to develop their meaning perspectives in association with student learning and context (Mezirow, 1991; Clark and Easen, 1992; van den Berg, 2002). This is possible through these recommended means:

- Self-examination from students' feedback

Students' feedback can be diagnostic for teachers and can provide them with better understanding of teaching and learning (Marsh, 1987; Ramsden and Dodds, 1989; Ballantyne, et al. , 2000).

- Regular reflective practice in collaboration (Neufeld and Grimmett, 1994; McAlpine and Weston, 2000) and action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Wallace, 1996).

Reflective practice involves 'inner dialogue' and 'metacognitive thinking' which arouse pedagogical understandings the personal level and trigger pedagogical thinking at the social level. When teachers are involved in conversations about teaching in collaboration with colleagues, their meaning perspectives can be transformed and hence learning is developed (Levin, 2003). Reflective practice guide the



teachers to divert their pedagogical thinking from an impulsive and intuitive to a critical direction (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Richards, 1990).

Action research enables the teachers to evaluate their teaching. A clear goal set and an evaluative framework, combined with systematic reflection allow teachers to inquire and make a critical judgement on their teaching. Action research can be a means of renewing and regenerating teachers' professional practice.

In the study context, the stated means to promote teachers' awareness of learning from the classroom are relatively lacking. Therefore, the issue of the student learning in relation to the student culture is inadequately addressed. Consequently, the classroom to some extent can motivate the teachers to learn for the purpose of developing the content and procedural knowledge, but the classroom is not prioritized by the teachers as a source of their 'craft knowledge', and practical experience (Brown and McIntyre, 1989). It is not viewed as their professional base where teachers and students are interdependent partners in learning and development (Thiessen, 1992).

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presents an explanation of the key findings, which embody the pivotal conception of professional development. Firstly, professional development is generated through the interplay of the three elements: the institutional context, the individual teacher, and the classroom practice. Supported by the institutional context, the individual teacher continually pursued their professional knowledge and formulated their practical professional knowledge. S/He also felt that it was a professional obligation to learn more in order to fulfil her/his role, as well as their personal enrichment in seeking knowledge. Secondly, there is further interplay between formal and informal learning in the participants' professional development. The two modes of learning regularly reinforce each other along the process of their learning.

Thirdly, the connection and missing link between the teachers' professional knowledge and the student learning appeared in the process of integrating knowledge into the classroom. The connection occurred when the teacher's intention, representation of practical professional knowledge, and approach to classroom management were 'student-focused'. The missing link occurred when these three factors did not relate closely to the students. Fourthly, as a consequence of the connection or missing link between the teachers' practical professional knowledge and the students' learning, continuity or discrepancies in professional development occurred in the classroom. It was revealed that two teachers were not fully aware of the student context. In this situation, the extent to which these teachers took the classroom as a source of learning was not sufficient.

The study provides a contribution to knowledge in the area of the professional development of teachers. It provides a strong support to educators such as Day (1999) and Nicholl (2000), in suggesting that professional development should connect the institution, the teachers and the students. The study also places an emphasis on the interactive role of formal and informal learning in teacher development, and on the classroom as an important source of learning for teachers.

The final chapter deals with the conclusion of the thesis. The principal points consist of its contribution to the areas of the study, the implications and limitations of the study, and recommendations for policy, practice, and further studies as well as personal reflections.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with a brief presentation of the major themes arising from the study and the contribution that these make to knowledge about the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Thailand. Next, I consider the implications of the findings and offer some recommendations for policy and practice. Following this I discuss the limitations of the study and make some recommendations for further research. Finally, I conclude the study with some personal reflections.

#### **7.2 A brief presentation of the major themes in the study**

The findings of this study reveal that the professional development of the participants lies in the intricate web of their personal histories. Through data from different sources, a complex labyrinth of life, learning, development, and professional identity emerges. This labyrinth varies according to each teacher's social and work context, as well as their personal dispositions. The most prominent common characteristic found among the three participants is their endeavour to achieve their conception of the professional ideal of an EFL teacher. Along this painstaking path, we see the endeavour of creating 'connectedness' (Palmer, 1998), by binding their identity and integrity with social contexts to attain that ideal. In maintaining connectedness, they have encountered conflicts, uncertainties, and injustice in their immediate social contexts. However, they have proven that throughout the complications in the continuum of life and professional activities, they have maintained their ideal, and their integrity - moral and professional - throughout their career.

### **7.3 Contribution to the areas of study**

The major contribution of this study to knowledge about professional development lies in the use of a qualitative approach, consisting of life history interviews together with semi-structured interviews and ethnographic classroom observations, to gather data from the three participating EFL teachers in the context of Thai Rajabhats. Three significant interlocking issues are revealed: how the lecturers develop their professional knowledge, how they integrate this knowledge into practice, and how professional development impacts on their classroom practice.

Regarding how the three participants acquired and developed their professional knowledge and skills, it can be seen that both formal and informal modes of learning serve as a solid basis for developing their practical knowledge. They continuously provide the participants with rich resources of content knowledge, particularly pedagogically related content knowledge, as well as enhance their proficiency in English language. There is a close interplay between the formal and informal modes of professional learning.

There are two recent important research works on teacher learning and development, which are of a broadly similar nature to my own study. Nevertheless, both differ from this study in important ways. The first is a longitudinal study of the professional development of four teachers' pedagogical thinking by Levin (2003). She focuses on the development of teachers' pedagogical understandings over a period of 15 years. The study reveals that social factors, as well as personal beliefs and values, are influential on the teachers' pedagogical thinking. However, the study does not focus on the classroom activities of these teachers as an important source of the development of pedagogical thinking. The second study is also a case study of four teachers of ESL in Hong Kong, conducted by Tsui (2003). Tsui's study focuses on the enactment of the curriculum and on classroom management as the significant

sources in which expertise is manifested. In her study, Tsui traces how teachers acquire and develop their professional knowledge to maintain their expertise in teaching English. Much emphasis is placed on the teachers' classroom behaviours, and their teaching processes. However, her study neglects the life histories of these teachers.

My study stresses professional development as a connecting constituent in the teacher's personal and professional life. It is very different from other studies which have been conducted in Thailand on professional development. In general, the main emphasis of existing studies of teacher professional development is on investigating the needs and problems of teachers in different institutions and at different levels. This is evident, for example, in a recent study by Khamtrong (2002). This is a comprehensive study, synthesising works on the needs and problems concerning teacher development addressed by teachers. About fifty studies included in his work are based on the needs, problems, important factors, processes, and activities in professional development. The rest are related to concepts of human needs, and the advantages of professional development.

It can be claimed, therefore, that my study is the first qualitative study on the professional development of Rajabhat EFL lecturers. Most existing studies have been conducted using a quantitative approach. It is hoped that the more subtle aspects of knowledge elicited by my study, showing an interlinking of personal dimensions, professional dimensions, and classroom practice, can contribute to further studies on the professional development of EFL teachers in particular, and professional development in general. It is considered also that more qualitative research could be conducted as an alternative, and effective way of exploring the subtle dimensions of teachers' lives, such as their learning and their perspectives concerning practice. It would be desirable if such a study placed the role of respondents as research participants who 'voice' their own identity in the study about themselves.

## **7.4 Implications from the findings**

The findings reveal a typical phenomenon; namely, that interconnectedness between the knowledge of the teachers and the knowledge of the students often breaks down even though the teachers are considered experts, or models, and to be very proficient in content knowledge and competent in pedagogical skills. In such situations, student learning is less effective. In a number of studies, expert teachers have been found to have representative characteristics, such as ‘automaticity’, being ‘opportunistic’, and flexibility’ (Berliner, 2002, 1994; Bond et al (2000); and Schemp et al, 1998), cultivated from their established schemata. These teachers have restructured and readjusted the content knowledge until they feel secure to continue exposing and transferring it to the students in an appropriate process of teaching. Having focused on readjusting instructional materials for a long period of time, these teachers tend to feel secure in using them time and time again. Based on their conception, the teachers have also readjusted their teaching approaches, developing these from their teaching experience. Finally, after years of devotion to connecting themselves and their teaching to the students, the teachers have come to find that certain current teaching approaches work almost all of the time, and that only minor adjustment is needed when teaching a different group of students.

There is nothing unethical about such conceptions and the behaviours mentioned above. However, when the conceptions significantly constitute their teaching processes and behaviours, so that these become routinised and the teachers feel satisfied with their customary practice, the vital interconnectedness between the teachers and students fails. This means that at some point in their professional lives, teacher learning and development can become less intensive, or at the extreme end, can come to be fossilised. As a result, effective student learning is at risk.

In order for teachers to continue their professional development and learning, to make these integral elements of their practice, and to make their teaching

meaningful as well as connected with student learning, the teachers' perceptions should be re-directed from their long-established beliefs and experience. This seems an almost impossible achievement due to two principal factors: the teachers and the workplace. Once again, the nature of learning involved in professional development needs to be emphasised. Learning is not merely a process of knowledge acquisition, or a process of knowledge accumulation. Learning can be equally effective when self-awareness and the critical evaluation of one's practice are considered central to the teachers' perceptions of their teaching and student learning. In other words, instead of being usually satisfied with what they do, teachers should always ask themselves questions such as:

1. Can I teach that element of knowledge through a different approach?
2. What did I expect the students to learn? How did it turn out?
3. How can I involve the students more in such activities?
4. Why do students show almost no reactions, or why do they give only yes or no answers?
5. Why are certain mistakes repeated, particularly by the same students?
6. Why do some students often show good performance in class, but perform poorly in tests? What types of temperament and personal dispositions might be affecting the student learning?

Questions such as these permeate throughout different aspects of teaching, and demand much thought and analysis in the teaching process. They exemplify that firstly, and in general, when asking these questions, teachers make an analytical inquiry into themselves, their teaching, and their students. Secondly, and specifically, the questions require the teachers to challenge themselves to apply different aspects of knowledge. For the EFL teachers, they need to reconsider their intention, and the content to be taught, reselect the materials, and try out different ways of teaching approaches, classroom management, and assessment techniques. The type of activities previously mentioned involve the teachers in a process of learning. It is the process, explained by Freeman (1996:

238), whereby the teachers ‘remake the meanings associated with every day actions.’ In such acts, the teachers are engaged in the process of

‘renaming their experience, thus recasting their conceptions and reconstructing their classroom practice’.

Through this engagement the teachers make sense of their regular practice, concerning their perspectives, teaching, and students, in new ways. In doing so, they adjust their ‘meaning perspective’ (Clark and Easen, 1992) and, as a consequence, their practice, rather than ‘reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know or believe’ (Kennedy, 1992:2).

The notion of teachers’ reinterpretation of classroom events, and of regular teaching processes is deemed by many researchers as critical to the teachers’ learning to support any change of their practice (Hoban, 2002; Bailey, 2002; Lange, 1990; Richards, Gallo, and Renandya, 2001). However, it is a very challenging process, and very difficult to be realised in the culture of a Rajabhat University for the following reasons:

1. In the wider educational context, it is firmly believed that all teacher learning and development, as well as from any further education for higher qualifications, derives from a formal mode. All through the national teacher reform scheme, teacher development is managed through the intervention of external government affiliated bodies. This shows a lack of awareness relating to responding to individual preferences of learning, the negligence of teacher informal learning from the classroom, and a failure to perceive the teachers’ active role in their learning. This is despite the role of Rajabhats as institutes responsible for delivering teacher education and training.
2. Learning through a self-development scheme, and in connection with classroom practice, seldom occurs in Rajabhats. The action research approach is applied in other areas, such as community development, but not in the classroom for teacher self-evaluation. Classroom-based



research is often conducted by faculty members furthering their postgraduate studies, but not by members of the faculty on a regular basis in their daily lives. It is seldom implemented in the practical context of the ordinary work of the Rajabhats. Therefore, it is not surprising that a policy of supporting teaching improvement through classroom research is never ranked as a high priority.

3. Learning for self-awareness, and for a change of one's own perspective needs both a conceptualisation, and a re-conceptualisation by the individual teacher, and these activities cannot work if the teacher is exposed only to 'external' knowledge input, or stimuli. The teachers need to be involved in an 'inter-psychological process of participation in social practices' in the work context (Billet, 2002). However, the current work culture in Rajabhats is detrimental to teacher development, as political issues influence deeply throughout every level of management. Collegiality is not strong in the culture of the Rajabhats. Partnership between teachers to improve classroom teaching are atypical as conflicts among colleagues divide them into small groups or individuals. Collaboration is difficult.
4. Teaching performance is not a leading criterion in the annual appraisal for promotion. That means qualitative criteria, such as classroom observation, portfolios and self-evaluation records, are ruled out. Student evaluation is applied, but items in the evaluation form are of a generic type, and irrelevant to the quality of teaching in the classroom or to teaching improvement. Annual appraisal raises conflict among colleagues as it is based on the quantity of duties performed and the favours made to administrators rather than the quality of what goes on in classrooms.
5. Time constraints greatly contribute to the problem of the teachers' reluctance to re-focus their perspectives on their practice. Poor leadership makes the administrators see that fairness in work is derived

from an equal share of the teaching load. Teachers who may be prepared to take the initiative in teaching development cannot devote more time to address the students' needs. Therefore it is very hard for them to change their mindset from habitual circumstances, and familiar teaching strategies.

The above list of barriers to teacher learning seems pessimistic. However it indicates major stumbling blocks to professional development existing in the contexts of the Rajabhats. Therefore, planning for professional development must be based on the realisation that these barriers have affected the progress of teachers, students, and institutions.

## **7.5 Recommendations for policy and practice**

The policy concerning professional development of EFL lecturers should reflect an awareness of those at a management level that professional development is a learning process which is continual, constructive, participatory, and empowering. Opportunities for learning should be open to teachers throughout their career. Teacher learning for personal and professional growth should be prioritised for the purpose of improving student learning. The policy makers should also be aware of current trends in professional learning, which encompass various forms: formal, informal, and work-based. Teachers should be encouraged to actively participate, as well as create or select their own learning patterns according to their preferences. A different paradigm of professional learning should be recommended. The paradigm depicts a continuum of learning which starts from teachers who are actively involved by teachers for the development of their teaching performance. The continuum leads on to individual classrooms in which learning is a constructive collaborative activity involving teachers and students. The learning continuum should be driven to reach other teacher colleagues so as to achieve the ultimate goal of development which is the improvement of teaching and learning. In

order to create the continuum, professional development of teachers should be prioritised in the Rajabhat human resource development plan, and since the EFL lecturers are responsible for improving the English competence for all students in the faculty, they should have better opportunities to develop their professional knowledge.

The implementation of the policy concerning EFL professional development should acknowledge the three categories of professional learning: formal, work-based and informal. To get the teachers involved in these three categories, the following suggestions are given:

1. Time and budget should be adequately allocated to encourage the teachers to get involved in professional development of all types. For example a study leave should be granted to the teachers to enrol in award-bearing courses for higher qualifications both overseas and inside the country, to attend short-term training courses for specific purposes overseas. The nature of the courses should enhance their teaching as well as English language skills. The budget should be allocated according to the actual expense required for the courses in order to show sincere promotion of professional development.
2. In order for work-based professional development to occur, students' feedback is an integral element. The department should set a policy requiring teachers to request feedback from students. The feedback should not include only the students' evaluation, but also their personal reflection about themselves and their learning in relation to the teacher's teaching. Feedback from the students can be essential information for teachers to conduct classroom research aiming to improve their teaching and student learning.
3. Work-based studies should be disseminated and shared among colleagues in order to stimulate professional learning. Improvement of student learning should be a forefront issue in a university policy, and it should be addressed in the form of research, collaborative teaching, and collaborative learning among teachers.

A collaborative research project can enable lecturers to become involved in investigating their practice for a certain amount of time. They can have an opportunity to observe phenomena in their classrooms, in a systematic and analytical way. This can lead not only to a new body of knowledge arising from critical awareness and their own contexts, but also to disseminate and exchange knowledge from local and overseas practitioners. Collaborative learning occurs when researchers from partner universities work together in the research setting.

4. As for the promotion of informal learning, the university should set up an environment that encourages teachers to learn informally from available, sophisticated and innovative resources, such as web resources. A learning resource unit especially for teachers should be provided for the benefit of informal learning.
5. Support for professional development for EFL teachers should include sabbatical leave. This will benefit the teachers immensely since they can be away from daily routines; be in an environment that enables them to reconceptualise their practice; find ways to change practice; and finally adopt different perspectives on teaching.
6. At the department level, the issues of time and means are the foci upon which professional development is dependent. Time should be allocated on a regular basis for professional development activities. In the work culture, where 'losing face' and seniority are predominant, senior lecturers may be unwilling to articulate what goes wrong in their classes and newly experienced lecturers may be intimidated when arguing with their senior colleagues. However, collaboration for reflective practice should be strongly encouraged and supported. It should start as a form of meeting, of which the main agenda focuses on sharing 'good ideas' and challenges about teaching. In this way, teaching will be the topic of concern. Then in later meetings, topics concerning teaching may rank high on the agenda, and discussion about teaching and possible

solutions will become customary. Later, collaboration for reflective practice can become a norm of the department.

In a collaborative environment, the expert or senior lecturers, as well as the newly experienced lecturers, gain benefits. The former group can share their teaching experience, which may be useful for the latter group. More importantly, both groups have an opportunity to articulate what works, and what goes wrong in their practice. In other words, the reality and the limits of practice are revealed. The teachers, as a community, assist one another in restructuring their views and beliefs in relation to their classrooms. In collaborative situations, lecturers exchange dialogues, and conversations in the professional culture, which 'facilitates knowledge construction in the public process' (Coronel et al., 2003: 131).

A collaborative atmosphere for learning among EFL colleagues should be urgently reconstructed to eliminate factions and feuds derived from bureaucratic and political problems dominant in Rajabhat universities. It is hoped that systematic collaboration can alleviate issues that give rise to more conflict, such as the annual performance appraisal for promotion. When reflective collaboration is practised regularly, it can create self and mutual respect. Self-evaluation can involve 'interpersonal responsibilities' (Oja, 1989). This is how professional learning occurs in a climate of mutual help and confidence.

In conclusion, professional development should have its place as one of the most significant policies in the strategic plans of the university. Teacher development should be seen as vitally linked to student learning and achievement, and the high standards that the universities aim to reach. Moreover, it should be realised among administrators as well as lecturers that there are alternative ways of involvement in professional development for lecturers, other than attending courses.

## **7.6 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies**

This study contributes to the knowledge base concerning the professional development of EFL teachers as being embedded in their personal and professional lives. It presents a conception that professional development is not compartmentalised, but an integral part of the personal and professional lives of these teachers. The study has revealed several major issues concerning professional development. However, there are some limitations in the study, which are due to current role constraints. During the research process, I took a dual role: being both a full-time lecturer and a part-time research student. I had to arrange shifts for teaching duties, fieldwork, and study visits. Although the fieldwork covers 18 months, I believe that if I had been able to spend four to six months participating in everyday activities at work with each participant, I would have gained richer and more subtle data from direct observation of the teachers. Also, if I had been able to request that the participating teachers write a reflective journal, I would have another source of data to triangulate. However, during that time it was not possible for the senior lecturers to complete journal writing because it was an unusual activity for them and it took more of their time.

Due to the limitations discussed, I would recommend that the following further studies be proposed:

1. A case study of one exemplary EFL teacher in a Rajabhat university. A full scale ethnographic inquiry should be employed. The researcher should participate in every day activities in the work context. The life history interview should be used together with participant observation, and open-ended interviews. It is believed that, by being a participant and consistently present in their work contexts, the researcher can gather data on the teacher's learning alongside the process of teaching, such as planning, preparing materials, teaching, and assessing the students' performance. The study will capture the typical learning process of the

teacher, in which personal perspectives, and dispositions, come into play within their practice. The students should also be included as respondents to find out how learning is interpreted by them, and to see the extent to which student learning is related to teacher learning. This type of study can lead to a better understanding of what factors influence an individual teacher's perspectives of learning and teaching, and how they can be changed or employed to restructure the teacher's perception of her/his practice.

2. A study should be specifically carried out on the contexts that support and strengthen professional development, particularly institutions, departments, and classrooms. The respondents should include senior managers, middle managers and staff in the department. The issues in focus should be their views of learning, of professional development of teachers, of student learning and achievement, and of the progress of the institutions. It is believed that the views on these aspects are manifested in their supportive actions for, or in their indifference towards, professional development. Staff members should be included as respondents because their views and attitudes, as well as their beliefs concerning professional development, the promotion of teacher learning and development and support from the management, should be investigated. Also, the students' perspectives relevant to teachers and their teaching should be examined. Student culture also affects teachers' beliefs and their learning. The students' perceptions of the atmosphere of their institutions should also be included. A multi-site study for the benefit of cross-comparison of the contexts would be ideal.
3. A study on 'deviant' (in the sense of those teachers who do not participate in professional development) cases is proposed. Some significant characteristics of EFL teachers reluctant to become involved in learning, formally and informally, can be useful in comparison with the characteristics of the exemplary teachers. As the professional development pattern of each teacher is unique, and depends very much

on personal dispositions, an investigation into the ‘deviant’ cases can contribute to formulating appropriate plans and measures for this type of teacher to feel responsible as a professional and to become involved in development activities. It is of interest also to know how they feel about behaving the way they do, and how they feel about their duties, colleagues, and students. Likewise, how the community feels about these ‘deviant’ teachers is worth studying also.

## **7.7 Personal reflections**

This study has helped me see the significant role of teachers in the development of students’ learning and of the institutions. It is encouraging to be told about enriching experiences in which those lecturers fulfil their duties as professional teachers, as well as fulfil their professional ideal. Their pursuit of improvement greatly contributes to the area of teaching English as a foreign language, to the development of students, and to the progress of the institutions.

The study has broadened my views of professional development, particularly the underlying concepts of interconnectedness and meaning construction. It is exemplified by the lecturers in the study that how we examine and re-examine our thinking, and how we structure and restructure our evaluation of things in our contexts, influences how we behave, perform our duties, interact with others, and strive for change. It is also evident that the most difficult part of learning is learning from self-awareness. Teachers, like all of us, are reluctant to evaluate themselves and their actions. They seem to be unaware that a lack of self-evaluation results in lacking the knowledge of ‘pluralism’ (Palmer, 1998) existing in their environments. Thus, by not recognising the diversity of students, the development of education is at risk.

Apart from the teachers, the study presents a typical image of administrators, especially those in Rajabhat universities. The image embodies a contracted, top-down vision of development, a limited view of seeing teachers as subjects to be ‘upgraded’, and poor leadership targeting only short-term gains. If no



change is found in their views, the number of Rajabhat universities will be decreased due to high competition, and quality assurance standards.

Finally, I appreciate being given the opportunity to conduct the study. All through the research process I put effort into connecting myself with my participants. I believe we share the common role of making meaning in our joint construction of knowledge.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **The Outline of the Life History Interview Schedule**

#### **1. Personal Information**

- Age
- Time of teaching career entry
- Education
- Present position

#### **2. Family Background**

- Parental occupation
- Parents support
- Family environment
- The participants' interests and the attitude of family members towards the interests

#### **3. Education History**

- Types of learner
- Aptitude of particular subject
- Inherent dispositions
- Attitudes towards interactions with foreigners
- Opportunities for interactions with foreigners
- Impact of experiences in those interactions
- Impact of courses in formal education
- Impact of teachers in formal education
- Activities in formal education resulting in deep interests in learning English or in becoming teachers of English.
- Impact of particular teaching styles from formal education and development
- Ways of seeking more knowledge and competence in English
- Courses taught by native speaker teachers



- Student teaching experience

#### **4. Teaching career entry and early years**

- Decisions and reasons
- Experiences in the early years
- Beliefs and attitudes towards teaching
- Professional development in this period
- Integration of knowledge acquired into classrooms

#### **5. Postgraduate Study**

- Subject areas of study
- Impact of the study
- Informal learning

#### **6. Professional Development after Postgraduate Study**

- Formal courses
- Informal learning
- Relevance and impact of formal courses
- Application of acquired knowledge to the classroom
- Perceptions of students in relation to the acquired or practical knowledge
- Frequencies of involvement in informal learning
- Typical activities in informal learning
- Impact of informal learning on teaching beliefs and teaching styles

#### **7. Participants' perceptions at present**

- Perceptions of their teaching styles
- Perceptions of students
- Perceptions of content of the subject
- Changes perceived in these areas
- Links between Professional development and teaching

- Perceptions of the role of classrooms.

**8. Support of institution for Professional development**

- Support for formal courses
- Support for development of knowledge in teaching
- Collaboration among colleagues or collegiality in department

**9. Family Support for Professional Development**

**10. Vision and Ambition of life and teaching profession**

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Outline of the semi-structured interview schedule**

#### **Pre-observation interview**

- Content to be taught, teaching materials to be used
- Teaching planning, processes, strategies, and activities to be employed
- Expectation of students' performance
- Continuity to the following sessions

#### **Follow-Up interview**

- Reflection on the previous teaching session
- Relation of the teaching styles, processes, and management to beliefs
- Factors impacting those beliefs
- Relation of some practical knowledge to formal or informal learning

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Outline of the student group interview schedule**

1. Decisions on enrolling in the programme
2. Attitudes towards learning, and taking English as a major field.
3. Teachers' teaching styles, and strategies observed
4. Preferred teaching styles of the teacher and reasons for the preference
5. Strategies considered as inappropriate
6. Students' views on materials/texts used in the course
7. Students' learning strategies regularly used in the course
8. Changes learning strategies from the beginning of the course
9. Students' views on learning inside and outside the classrooms
10. Students' views on relevance of the course to real life situations

## APPENDIX 4

### The Sample of the Matrix Display

Source of beliefs	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
<i>Beliefs deriving from professional and teaching experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need to include every skill in one session</li> <li>• Teaching must fall into steps, either three or four.</li> <li>• Theories, concepts and methods of teaching do not change. What varied are the content and context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should be taught to make the tourists feel that the trip is theirs.</li> <li>• Tour management is important in English for Tourism.</li> <li>• Management of such matters as accommodation, food, tourists' interests is in the first priority, not the content of the description</li> </ul>	
<i>Beliefs deriving from teaching experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student teachers should be aware of what good teaching is.</li> <li>• Theories, concepts and methods of teaching do not change. What varied are the content and the context</li> <li>• Students ' failure also derives from the teacher.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good guides have to promote next tours, sell tours.</li> <li>• Students will accumulate vocabulary as they get older, while working.</li> <li>• Teaching tourism is like training students to be leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods depend on the context</li> <li>• Methods have to be appropriate with students , if not they won't work</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 5

### Impact of Professional Development

<b>Incremental development</b>
<p>Nanta: <i>'It's very difficult for me to trace back which bit of knowledge has been acquired from which sources of professional development. It's incremental development.'</i> <b>(semi-structured, June 12, 03)</b></p> <p>Direct impact of formal courses</p> <p>Passorn: <i>'I participated in the training run by the British Council. It was on teaching the communicative approach. The speaker presented steps of teaching in the real classroom, and I found that it worked. The student could greet each other.'</i> <b>(semi-structured, January 14, 03)</b></p>
<b>Impact of informal learning</b>
<p>Silk: <i>'I took several tours, almost around the world. I observed how the guide in each country conducted her/his tour. A guide in Australia drives, informs tourists, tells about small things related to the place, and sells tours.'</i> <b>(Life history, March 17, 03)</b></p>